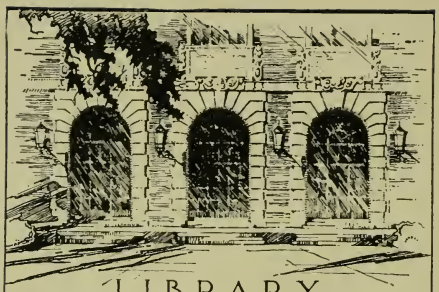

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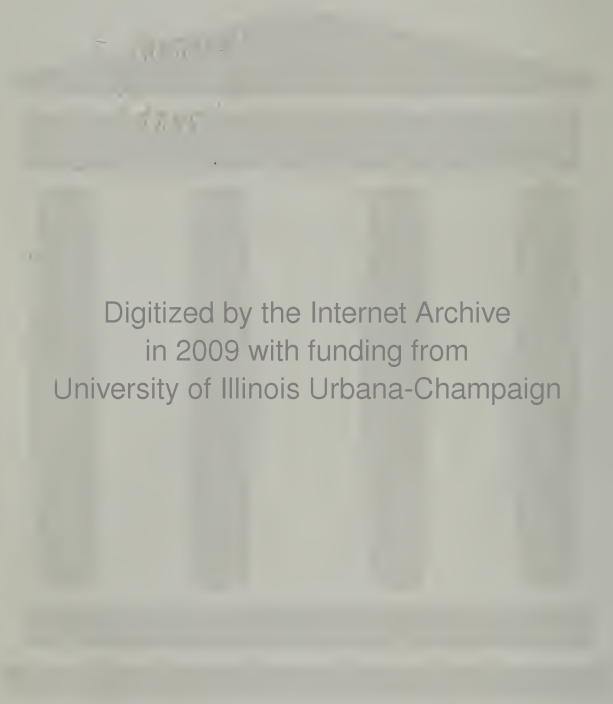

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MISS RUSSELL'S HOBBY.

MISS RUSSELL'S HOBBY.

A Novel.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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MISS RUSSELL'S HOBBY.

CHAPTER I.

NUMBER ONE.

Wareham was a picturesque and business-like small sea-port, bearing marks of respectable age about some of the narrow streets leading away from the quay. These were paved with small round pebbles, very trying to tender feet, and had a strong odour of tar, cordage and shell-fish. But the wide-spreading, breezy downs which sloped away downwards from the cliffs for miles, added to a sheltered cove, well-adapted for bathing, in course of time brought a change to the primitive and somewhat peculiar population. Wareham became the fashion; and a certain speculator built a row of modest houses, close to the cove-beach; he also raised a smooth walk in front, called the promenade, where people might have the enjoyment of tide and breeze, without the annoyance of the pebbles. These houses were let as lodgings, and they were in such demand that building became a mania. Squares, rows, terraces, crescents, and detached villas, sprang up as if by magic, causing a few of the old inhabitants of solid, if unpretending dwellings, to shudder at the notion of living in such unsubstantial "lath and plaster affairs."

Then the old parish church, on the top of the hill, was too small and too distant. So a new chapel of ease was built, forming a focus, as it were, for the new part of the town.

The architect of New Wareham was a man of one idea, and there was little or no variety in the aspect of the new buildings, all with the same verandahs and showy ornaments. It was a relief to turn away from these modern houses, to the more old-fashioned part, where venerable myrtles, that had weathered many a winter, and monthly roses in perfection, were living proofs of the "mild salubrity" of the air.

Houses have a physiognomy, and there was one building in Wareham which could hardly fail of attracting attention and remark. It stood above the quay and the quay streets, on a hill, and in an exposed situation, but commanding a fine view of the sea and the cliffs.

Other houses had lately been erected near it, so that the original name of "Prospect House" was altered to that of "No. 1, Queen's Terrace." These new comers, however, did not join the old one. They stood close in a row, but No. 1 was still alone and separate in its glory. The narrow space which divided it made a famous pipe or vent for the wind when it blew seawards; and sometimes how it did howl and rush, wailing or shrieking, exultant, round No. 1!

It was a plain brick house, innocent of all stucco or wash; tall, straight and grim. There was no ornament about it, but it was substantial, and always in good repair. The windows blinked in the sunshine, disdainful of shade or verandah, trellis-work for plants, or even window flower-stands. Some wags affirmed that it was a capital likeness of the mistress. Certainly it was a remarkable house, and one could not help looking at it, and trying to read the meaning of its odd face.

Strangers were apt to saunter into the pleasant lounge—the stationer's shop and circulating library—to ask the civil master a few questions about No. 1. Such as—

"Who lives in that funny, tall house at the end of Queen's Terrace, looking as if it had quarrelled with its neighbours?"

"That, sir? Oh, that is the residence of Miss Russell. A very old, respectable Wareham family. Two ladies, maiden ladies,—live there all the year round. Excellent people, sir."

"Any relation to the Russell who has a counting-house on the quay?"

"The very same, sir; that is, Mr. Russell is the owner of the house, and it is his sisters who reside with him. Old Mr. Russell, the father, lived there before him, in fact, built the house, I believe."

"Young Mr. Russell, then, is not married, I presume? Is he well off?"

"Oh no, sir; Mr. Russell is not married, nor likely to be," (with just the *soupçon* of a smile). "Quite a bachelor, sir, and shy—retiring, as one may say, from ladies' society. A man of very particular habits, and, they say, very learned, and very rich. It is said that they have a deal of money. Saving people you see, sir, making much and spending little. Mr. Russell is owner of the greater number of the vessels which belong to the place. Does a brisk business in wine, sir, and has large coal-vaults."

"Indeed! One never meets them out in society; I don't remember seeing any lady or gentleman of the name."

"Oh no, sir. You see, being the old inhabitants, they don't care to have much to do with the summer visitors, sir. They're intimate with the originals, as they call them; the Miss Roses, and the vicar, and, I believe, with Mr. Lewis.

But it is said that the ladies are particularly strict in their notions, and as for Mr. Russell, sir, he is just not altogether like every one else. He works very hard and shuns all company."

"Eccentric, eh?"

"Exactly so, sir. But if you are fond of antiquity, sir, and, as I presume, wishing to get information about the early history of this place, why, there is no one more likely to be able to afford you help than Mr. Russell. And I may say—may so far venture—for he is so remarkably benevolent and obliging that"—

"Thank you, thank you! Perhaps I may meet him yet. The outside of the house excites my curiosity, I confess." And so on.

"We," being privileged above the casual visitor, will enter beyond the outside of No. 1, and since descriptions are wearisome, let us as briefly as possible do all that is needful in this way at once. First introducing Miss Russell herself.

She was undoubtedly and confessedly (we are speaking of some two score of years ago, be it remarked,) an elderly lady, never attempting directly or indirectly to conceal the fact. She wore her own grey hair, at a time too, when brown, black, and flaxen wigs, or "fronts," were in general use. Miss Russell dressed in her own fashion, and frowning down every style of bonnet but her own high-crowned and poke-front shape, she looked askance at frill, or ruffle, or boa, or any of those charming trifles—for, as she said, "they consumed both time and money."

Miss Russell was said to be "a good lady, but of a particular temper." When people wondered that, though the second servant never stayed more than a few weeks, Betty,

the cook, lived on, year after year, and sometimes expressed their surprise to her how she could stand it; her answer was, with a shake of the head, but with a tender smile on her round, plump face—"Missus was rather paticklar, certainly; but, for that matter, every one had his temper; and she was a wonderful religious lady; and Miss Anna was uncommon clever; and Mr. Jacob as good a master as ever trod the earth. Never was such a man for patience! never found fault; eat mouldy cheese or stale bread, and never knew it from the best; was a good brother, and kind even to the very cat. No, no," Betty would add, "I'm not a-going to leave 'em for a few words from missus. There aint a more upright and respectable family in all Wareham."

I must now introduce Miss Anna Russell.

It is a nice and delicate point to decide on Miss Anna Russell's age. There had originally been a large family; and only three of them surviving childhood, there might be considerable gaps between the three. It was a subject never mentioned in the family, Jacob having been once peremptorily rebuked by both sisters, for examining the register in the old parish church and making notes of the dates. From that hour, the subject was not broached among them, and Anna was left to enjoy the benefit of a doubt.

Her figure was young—short, plump, and shapely, with a neatly-turned ankle, of which she was said to be rather proud. Her face looked older. She had light, very light-blue eyes, and decidedly flaxen hair, which was very thin, and curled naturally, in little stiff, frizzy corkscrews. It had been much admired when she was a child, and, therefore, it was still a custom in the family to consider it a standard by which all other hair was judged. She took

great care of it, as a matter of principle, and dressed it in a rather elaborate fashion, parting it very much on one side, and ekeing out the scanty quantity which remained behind, after the corkscrews were deducted, by sundry hollow and wonderful plaits, which resembled basket-work, and caused one to wonder how it was done, and how it remained so neat, hour after hour, day after day, and year after year.

Anna, like her elder sister, went on her own way in the fashion of her dress. Spanish combs and high bows, Grecian braids, coronet-like plaits, all followed one another at fashion's beck, but Anna Russell changed not; as it had been at sweet sixteen, so was it now. Anna always wore a black velvet band across her forehead, clasped with a pearl ornament. This band had once had the unusual effect of exciting her brother's observation: after gazing at her for some time, he said—

"Anna, have you cut your head?"

"No, certainly. What makes you suppose I have?"

"Why, then, do you bandage it?"

"Well, Jacob, that is just one of your polite speeches, and shows your utter want of observation! I have worn this *bandeau* for some time."

"I beg your pardon, my dear, but I certainly did not observe it before; and certainly I cannot see that it is either ornamental or useful."

"It is useful," pronounced Miss Russell, who also wore one, though without a clasp; "it serves to keep back the hair. I quite approve of a velvet band, though I think the clasp hideous."

Then Jacob bowed, as he always did, to his sisters' authority, and made no answer; though Anna rattled on a long

time about his want of taste and discrimination, and ended in an oft-repeated argument with her sister about dress—Miss Russell condemning Anna's frills, ribbons, and bows, and Anna sighing over the want of taste in the Russell family, and declaring that she was born for a different atmosphere, and valued the little elegancies of life. In fact, she often said, it "cut her to the soul to see persons make themselves so uninteresting," and all from lack of a little taste! She had made notes for a tract, which, one of these days, she intended to publish, on "Taste," in which she meant to prove that "taste was as much a virtue as modesty or honesty." In fact, if Anna had a mania, it was this; while her sister's "hobby" was about servants, and the proper way of bringing them up.

She said she had been so plagued by careless and ignorant girls, that she was anxious to find a subject on which to try her own theory—a girl, in fact, who should be well taught from the beginning; if she was homeless and friendless, all the better, as she would be more likely to remain at Queen's Terrace. Miss Russell wished to prove to the world what a proper domestic servant should be, according to her notions.

The other subject which shared this lady's principal attention was her brother's faults.

Jacob, the youngest of the family, generally called "old Russell," or "old fellow," by his friends, was one of those persons whose real age it is difficult to guess, looking old when young, and then changing very little with added years. Stories were told, by a few old acquaintance, of his having once been very different; but only a very few knew him well, for he avoided rather than sought society. The popular opinion in Wareham was, that he was "just a quiet, kind

gentleman, not fond of talking, but with a pleasant voice, too, and always ready to do a kind deed."

The old church was quite two miles from the harbour and quay, half hidden by elms, and possessing a tower and screen of considerable beauty. The new chapel of ease, a shapeless mass of brick, with sash windows, and filled with cushioned pews, was in the hands of a decidedly popular preacher, who made a good income from the pew-rents.

Mr. Lewis was much the fashion among a certain party, and the subject of conversation from Sunday morning to Saturday night.

In the bustle and excitement of new schools, Thursday lectures, and bazaars, something like a feud arose, waged principally over tea-tables, as to the respective qualities of the rector, Mr. Grant, and Mr. Lewis; some zealously approving the old quiet way of the former, others warmly advocating the new. But, perhaps, Wareham would have been very dull without such subjects.

CHAPTER II.

EVENING VISITORS.

It was a dismal evening in November. It had rained all day, and the sails of the vessels in the harbour presented a very sorry spectacle.

All the summer visitors had departed; and the lodging-houses were deserted, with papers, "To let," displayed in the upper windows, but with very small hope of any application.

Even on the favourite lounge, the quay, there were but comparatively few idlers,—sailor-like men, in "sou'-westers," with their short, blackened pipes; or a few urchins, who had contrived to escape observation, and were hard at play.

There was a sound of preparations from a brig, on board of which briskly stepped the master, intent on having all ready to go out with the tide. The song of the men, too, rose, in wild harmony, above the plash of the tide and the blasts of wind.

"So old Mr. Berkeley has cut his cables," observed one of the idlers, speaking a peculiar seafaring idiom, as well as broad Devonshire.

"Ay, ay; another of the old set gone. He'll have left some money. I wonder who'll have it, eh?"

"Don't know. 'Tis a wonder he never settled and married. And there's another, Russell—he'll never get a wife neither. Pity, too. I don't like for to see the old stock go out: I don't zim the new kind, not I."

"Mr. Russell may marry yet. He's no so old as folks say. I know his figure pretty well. Lor' bless'e, 'tis they sisters hinder him of taking a wife and home of his own. He war a right down one for the girls, once a time back along. I knows a thing or two, that I do!"

"Indeed! Anybody would say, to look at un, he was one of the steady sort."

"Well, and so he be. I don't mean no harm—not I—by insinniating he was a bit sweet on the ladies. But I do say Master Jacob, as we called un, was not always so shy of company; and there's a lady, not so far from here either, who shall be nameless, who looked cruel kindly on him, and he was sweet on her, for all she was the oldest. And there was a something in all the troubles, which set in like foul weather, that changed him uncommon. But I'll wager, if he lives, there'll be little Russells yet."

"So much the better. Well, everybody has gone fro' the place now, I guess. Like the butterflies, they come with the sunshine, and go away again with the storm. Well, it's good for trade, too. I say, Tom, hast heard aught of they strange folks—come ashore that night?"

"My missus heard they was very bad; the child ill, and no one knows the truth about it. She sent out a fine jewel thing, they say, worth guineas, and old Newman made a bargain of it. He knows what he's about, he do."

"But they say all the money he gived about it was gone in no time."

"Ay, ay, is that it? Eh? We'll have some rough weather before it settles again."

"May hap; I don't say no. But aint it lecture to-night up yonder?"

"I knows nought of it, not I," returned the other. "You see I don't zim[1] these new ways. I never goes within the door of that fine new place. If I don't go up the hill to the old church, I go to Wesleyan in Ship Street—I knows what I'm after then. Fish or fowl! This here new parson, and the new chapel, aint neither one thing nor t'other. Some say he's a chapel-man, others say he's every bit as much a minister as the rector himself. Can't say,—can't make un out. He suits they fine butterfly folk, I suppose, and they keeps the chapel filled. Mr. Russell don't go there. I meet un up the hill most Sundays; and when I axed un what he thought of it, he gived one of his quiet smiles like, and hoped his legs would serve him some years yet for mounting the hill to the old place. And that same is my opinion also."

"Mr. Lewis is a cruel fine preacher, they say, and all wi' out a' book, too," rejoined the other.

"Jist what I say. If he were a right down clargyman of the old sort, he'd have his book. When I goes to Wesleyan I expects no book. But I likes to know what is what; and Church o' England holds to books: and that's all about it."

A woman here came up to them, and said—

"Pray, d'ye happen to know if Mr. Russell has left his counting-house?"

"I ha'n't zeed un," answered the man. "Most like he's

[1] Anglicè—"Fancy."

busy, for the *Wareham Trader* goes out with the tide, and Captain Toms was up for orders, I know."

The woman drew a thick shawl closer round her, and seemed determined to brave the rain for a time, for, with a large umbrella, and pattens on, she walked up and down the quay, keeping pretty much in front of Russell's warehouses.

At last, a tall man appeared at the door, and looked about —up at the sky, and down on the flowing tide; then he appeared to watch the small brig from which came the song.

"A dirty night, your honour," remarked the man with the sou'-wester, touching his forelock respectfully.

"Rather so, Sam. Good night to you," answered the gentleman, and was passing on, with long strides, when the woman before mentioned came up, saying—

"Beg pardon, sir, but I was going to ask a word with you. Dear me, Mr. Jacob, she is perfectly raging mad! The very child's clothes is taken off her back, and pawned. The poor creatures are starving! No sir, no," she added, as she saw him put his hand into his pocket, "I can't take no more of your money, sir, for it all goes one way. But, 'deed, 'tis a cruel, sorrowful sight, and my heart aches for the children; and, please, sir, I was a-going to take the liberty to beg you to step in a bit."

"I had rather not; I had far rather not, Mrs. Brown. Take my money, and use it as from yourself; buy everything needful, I beg. But as to my intruding—my going, I mean,— I couldn't think of it."

"Well, sir, as you like, of course. But I have my reasons for wishing it. Others have been there — of course, all natural and right; but others don't always see the way clear; and, to my notion, something else nor tracts is wanting. And

the children, particularly that poor girl, need some advice; and you're the man, Mr. Jacob. Bless you, sir, do'ee come. 'Tis an uncommon case, depend on 't, and others may do as much mischief as good."

The word "others" was always pronounced with peculiar emphasis, and seemed to convey a meaning understood by Mr. Russell, for a very slight smile curled the corners of his lips, which, however, gave way to sadness, as, almost pushed on by the woman, he entered a passage near his counting-house, and then followed her up a narrow and dark staircase. He mildly suggested that his sisters would be uneasy, and would be waiting tea: but Mrs. Brown assured him he would never regret a cold cup of tea after what she would show him, and added, that surely Miss Russell would not be offended when she knew what had kept him. Thus talking, they disappeared.

The rain dripped, on and it grew dark. Meanwhile, Betty had closed the shutters and drawn the curtains in No. 1, Queen's Terrace; and, by the light of a small, modest fire, Miss Russell sat very uprightly, tearing paper into small bits for cushion stuffing—an occupation she was fond of when there was no girl to look after and to follow from room to room. The last housemaid had been gone five weeks, and Betty knew her work and her mistress's ways too well to afford a shadow of excuse for any watching or loitering; so that Miss Russell's paper-bag filled wonderfully, while she considered where to look for another servant.

A loud rap at the door disturbed her cogitations. It was an unlikely evening for a visitor.

"It must be Cousin Mitchell," she uttered, severely; but a smile—very measured and faint, it is true, but still a

smile—passed over her face, as "Mr. Lewis" was announced.

"Be seated, my dear sir. This is very kind of you. Betty, call Miss Anna. Anna is very busy, as usual, for the bazaar. Very wet, sir."

Mr. Lewis drew his fingers through his thick, wavy hair, and pulled up his white neckcloth, as he answered slowly—

"It is, indeed, very wet, Miss Russell, and I should not be extremely surprised if I had to preach to bare walls to-night."

"Sir," said Miss Russell, with a stiff bow, "there are many in Wareham that no amount of bad weather would hinder from attending lecture. My sister and myself do not mind a little rain in such a cause. As for my brother—as for Jacob, Mr. Lewis, you know I wish I could persuade him; but"—

Here Anna's entrance caused an interruption. She tripped in youthfully, and with a smile of welcome, holding out both hands as she said—

"How gratified, how honoured we are! Dear Mr. Lewis, this is kind! I must apologize for being upstairs; but I was busy—the bazaar, you know. My room is like—I don't know what! Betty is tired of making paste, but it is such a healthy occupation, that of working for charity! I perfectly delight in it!"

"Yes, I know you are clever at fancy work, Miss Anna," answered Mr. Lewis, in a pompous manner; "witness this room!" and he looked round at the painted screens, the card-paper baskets, the fanciful pincushions, and the variety of mats, with which the room was crowded.

"A very loved friend of mine gave me a name, Mr. Lewis,"

Anna said, with a shy little simper. "She found me always making mats, so she said I ought to be called Professor of Mats. Ha! ha!"

"Waste of time, and very troublesome to housemaids," said Miss Russell, grimly.

"Oh, sister! how can you? It gives such a feminine finish to a room! I could make any place habitable-looking in that way. I must say I love a little taste; I like little elegancies; and I assure you, Mr. Lewis, all these little ornaments, such as they are, were done by myself, even by these little digits. I'm a handy little body, though I say it that shouldn't say it."

And she held up her hands, which were very white and small, and laughed, and shook her little curls.

Mr. Lewis cleared his voice, and said—

"I do not profess much knowledge of such things. We gentlemen, I believe, usually prefer a clear table. I have a predilection for simple furniture. Still, the end—the end, Miss Russell, is the thing to be considered. You say it is waste of time. Granted. Utter waste of precious time—excuse me, Miss Anna, generally speaking: but if these airy trifles can be turned to good, and bring a few pounds for any excellent object, for instance, the preaching the Gospel to benighted heathen, then, I say, Miss Russell"—

"Look at Jacob's tiresome kitten!" exclaimed Miss Russell; "it is the trial of my life, that creature!" and she rose to drive it from her paper-basket, which it had upset, scattering the tiny strips on the carpet.

"Pray go on, Mr. Lewis, I am all anxiety to learn your opinion," said Anna.

"What I was going to remark was,—why, I have the

success of this bazaar much at heart, and I am delighted to find you so zealous; I think it is turning talent to good account. Indeed, I am bound to say, that nowhere do I find such zealous supporters as in this house."

"Oh, sir, you are too flattering! It is delightful, I am sure, to meet with sympathy now and then, though (shaking her head, and looking grave) we must not look for it, but be content to work on without praise or applause. Oh, Mr. Lewis! I wish you would make use of me; and allow me a larger district for visiting, and distributing tracts."

"There are more to distribute than to read already, Anna," said Miss Russell: "I cannot see the use of it. Now, if you would teach the poor to scrub, and clean, and wash, and iron, it would be doing real good. I do not see the use of their learning to read and write."

"What! not to read the Bible, ma'am? Surely"—remonstrated Mr. Lewis.

"Well, just the Bible—perhaps the Bible. But I don't see that we are any better than our grandmothers, for all our learning. Young girls are so fine now, that they are scarcely fit to clean a grate."

"Sister always tries to damp one's enthusiasm," said Anna. "I daresay, though, I do need a check—I own I am apt to be carried away by my feelings. Now, I would have shoals of schools: I would teach everything; I would cultivate taste in every cottage. But I stand alone: sister and Jacob are cast in a different mould from me. Jacob only gives a dry 'humph' to any remark of mine on the subject; but Jacob"—

"Is a very peculiar man," said Miss Russell, decidedly and dryly.

"Why, I think there is no want of character in any of us," said Anna; "there is great originality in each of us, and we are very different. It is an interesting subject, Mr. Lewis, that diversity of character in a family. Jacob is very unlike other persons."

"Mr. Jacob Russell—humph! I have not the happiness of seeing Mr. Jacob Russell very often. He does not attend chapel, I think," said Mr. Lewis.

"No; I am sorry to say we cannot persuade him," said Miss Russell. "The fact is, that infatuation for Mr. Grant has been decidedly a snare in his life. Jacob is amiable on the whole, but apt to be obstinate and prejudiced; and go to Old Wareham he will, every Sunday: but he is peculiar—very."

"He is a little obstinate, I must confess, on this point," said Anna; "but I assure you, Mr. Lewis, that my brother has a great deal of character about him, when known. He is very provoking, certainly, yet I love him devotedly. Ours is a united little trio: we never have any quarrels or hasty words, except now and then, when sister scolds the stupid girls."

"I consider that my duty; and duty I will never shrink from," interrupted Miss Russell.

"There is nothing more delightful than home peace and love, Mr. Lewis; and I am sure, though Jacob does not say much about it, he appreciates all my little endeavours to make the room pretty and cheerful for him, after his hard day's work. He is always at home when he can be, and always content."

Here Betty entered with the tea-tray, and Mr. Lewis rose to go, but was pressed by both ladies to remain; so,

allowing himself to be persuaded, he sank once more into an easy chair, remarking, that if he had as comfortable a fireside as Mr. Russell, he, too, should be unwilling ever to leave it.

Miss Russell slipped out of the room quietly to order some addition to the meal, in honour of their guest, and Anna took advantage of the tête-à-tête to say how she admired the sermon of last Sunday, and dwelt long on the points which had struck her.

When tea was made, and the hot toast, for which Miss Russell was famous, duly set, Anna remembered that Mr. Lewis always took a "soft" boiled egg before preaching. She started up in haste, with a thousand self-reproaches, for not thinking of it before. Now, she would superintend the boiling herself, so that it should be nicely done, and away she ran to the kitchen.

"What's become of master, I wonder?" said Betty.

"Dear me, I forgot him!" returned Anna. "What can detain him, on lecture evening, too? It is done enough, Betty."

"Lecture! Sure you and missis will never think of going out to-night? Hearken to the rain, Miss Anna."

"We don't mind that. I would not miss it for the world. I would advise you to come too, Betty. You would be sure to hear something for the good of your soul."

"I hope, miss, 'tis for the good of my soul to bide at home and mind my work. That's what I was taught, at any rate. Not that I say a word agin going to church; but I couldn't be easy to leave all the work, even to hear Mr. Lewis; and no one can deny but he's a fine preacher, only somehow, my stupid head never understands him very well, and I zim he

says one thing over and over like. Master don't fancy him particular neither, I suppose."

"Oh, nonsense, Jacob is no judge. Besides, the time will come, I hope . . ."

"I wish the time would come for master to come home, any way," said Betty, catching Anna's last words as she went away. "Whatever keeps him out now, with no umbrella—for I zeed it hanging just now," she said to herself, as she wiped a tray, and placed thereon the egg. "I declare I must just run down with the umbrella, if missis is ever so angry. I won't stop, and I've taken in everything. Dear, I wish the new maid was come."

Betty took a careful survey of the table in the parlour, to see that everything was there; and then, putting on her bonnet, she took her master's umbrella, and as she trudged along in the wet streets, she thought with much complacency of the snug party she had just left.

"He's a likely clever man, surely; and Miss Anna, so pretty and fresh coloured—and it is time for her to get married anyhow—and she's made for a clergyman's lady. Ha, well! I'd like to see that. And then master—but deary me, no one isn't good enough for him. No one but myself knows the great big heart of 'un, with his silent ways. I'd like to see him married, and with children to carry down the name, for it's a good name, and Wareham will seem odd without it. Then missis and I could make it out together."

Betty had reached the counting-house before her castles were exhausted. The clerk was shutting the door, and he told her that Mr. Russell had left full an hour before.

"An hour! and no umbrella!" Betty was aghast!

"Where ever is he gone? Surely not to the Rectory. But where else?"

She hurried back, however, rather alarmed, lest the parlour bell should have rung during her absence.

It had not. They had been busily engaged in talking on an interesting subject—the very subject, as it turned out, which had caused Mr. Lewis's visit

CHAPTER III.

THE COINCIDENCE.

"Oh, Mr. Lewis, what a very affecting story! And is it really all true? The father transported, the mother very very bad, and the beautiful child—and you say they are not common people? . . ."

"Certainly not, Miss Anna," said Mr. Lewis, sipping his tea. "I find that some one has tried to assist them already; but I assure you it is a distressing case, and one which I knew would excite your interest."

"Well, let us get up a bazaar at once for them," said Anna.

"That would hardly do, I fear. You see, the bazaar for the missionaries is not yet come off. It would be too soon, I am afraid, to propose another."

"Oh, I don't see that! You may count on me for any amount of work, and I must coax my brother for a little money, you know. Sometimes he is generous enough."

"Your brother does not seem to patronise the place much," remarked Mr. Lewis, in a cold, doubtful tone; "which I am surprised at, as he has a great interest here—a commercial interest."

"Mr. Grant—it is entirely Mr. Grant's doing," said Miss Russell, with a frown. "Not but that Jacob is very liberal; too much so. I don't approve of throwing away money. Jacob would give gold to a beggar. He was always improvident."

And Miss Russell looked at the fire in a musing way, as if her thoughts had flown back to another period.

Mr. Lewis and Anna continued to talk of the best means of helping these poor persons, and Mr. Lewis, in a low voice, again expressed his great horror at the woman's intemperance. The first thing to be done, was certainly to induce her to be a teetotaller, and he asked if Anna had any temperance tracts by her.

"Bless me, there is the bell!" exclaimed Miss Russell, rising hastily. "Dear me, and Jacob not returned yet! I am sorry, Mr. Lewis, that he should appear so rude."

"Make no apologies I beg, ma'am. But perhaps you will like to remain and receive Mr. Russell; if so, pray stay; do not on my account . . ."

Miss Russell bowed and rang the bell. "Betty, you can put some boiling water to that tea when your master returns; make him comfortable, and say that we are gone to the lecture."

The sisters were soon bonneted and shawled, and each taking an arm of the clergyman, set forth for the chapel.

Betty locked the door after them, and then collected the cups and plates; peeped into the teapot with a significant sniff—"The strength of that won't cost him a night's rest, any how! I should say they might have left him a grain of tea! Poor man, so wet, too, as he'll be! I'll just make him a bit of fresh toast, hot and hot, and get a nice rasher.

They that doesn't care for themselves deserve that others should care for them! that's my maxim. Dear me, the ladies is very good and very zealous to go out to lecture in this rain!"

Half an hour passed, and Betty had placed the slippers before the fire and wheeled round an easy chair. Then she opened the shutters and looked out, but there was nothing to be seen but the chapel lights gleaming mistily through the thick rain in the distance. She stirred the fire fifty times, and moved to and fro in a fidgety way, not liking to leave the parlour for fear that the door bell should ring.

She stroked the cat, and turned Anna's knicknacks round and round, never seeming to satisfy herself as to their position on the chimney-piece; then she took up the poker again, when the sound of a heavy tread on the pavement caught her ear.

Before she had replaced the poker, there was a ring at the bell, and Betty bounded out, holding a candle in one hand.

"Goodness me, master! but I'm glad to see ye. Here, sir, let me . . ." And she took off the dripping hat and coat, and then followed him into the parlour, saying, in a cheerful tone, "The ladies is gone to lecture, finely anxious about you, sir. Please, sir, let me take off they wet shoes. Stay a minute, the stockings are wringing wet, too!"

Then she rubbed his feet in her apron, stirred the fire again, though it was all in a glowing blaze, and then bustled downstairs, re-appearing in a very short time with a smoking dish of bacon and eggs, and a plate of hot toast.

"Sorry, sir, the tea's no better, but missis didn't leave the key; forgot it, I suppose. Do'ee try to eat a bit, and take some hot tea."

All this time he had not uttered one word, but when she placed the eatables before him he did speak. He begged a blessing on the meal in very few words, but in a tone so earnest, that Betty put down the mustard she was about to hand to him, and remained silent and quiet for a minute or two.

"You've had no dinner to-day, sir; please to eat. I wish it had been better, but missis forgot. They lectures make her forget sometimes."

"Very good, Betty—it is very good. I only wish some poor creatures were half as well off."

Betty saw that something moved her master. There was a light in his eyes and a working in his features, not usual; while every now and then he sighed, and half exclaimed, "Poor souls!"

But Betty asked no questions. She stood behind his chair, regarding him with affectionate reverence, as if he were some superior being, and yet as if he were a child needing care and tenderness.

He ate a little, as if hungry, and then laying down his knife and fork, gazed dreamily and sadly at the fire. His head was inclined to be bald, for his hair, soft and fine as silk, was not strong. He was tall and large, rather what would be called heavy in build. The features were good, though not perhaps decidedly handsome; the eyes deep set a nd thoughtful. His general appearance was prepossessing, and full of mild dignity. As for Betty, she often thought to what she should liken him. Sometimes she thought he was like a king—or a bishop, perhaps. Then she fancied he must be like one of the apostles, having a fixed idea that they were all alike; or he might be a patriarch. She only wished

some skilful painter would draw him in one of these characters!

Her round, shining red face, and bright black eyes, formed a singular contrast to his pale, intellectual, and rather thin countenance, as she stood behind him, watching every movement, smiling as he eat, and looking puzzled and sad, when he sighed and laid down his knife.

The silence was soon broken by another shuffling of feet on the pavement,—this time not heavy, but hurried—and then a knock at the door.

It was the ladies. They came in full of words, and out of breath. Anna did not know which to speak of first, her brother's unusual absence, the sermon, or Mr. Lewis's tale of distress. She managed to jumble all three together so completely, that Jacob, after a perplexed gaze at her, took his book and drew to the fire. To-night, however, his usual refuge failed him. He could not read. Then he walked up and down the room, now stopping for a moment, and looking at his sisters as if about to speak—then opening the book again. But whether he looked at fire or page, Jacob saw only one thing—the vision of a child's wan, starving face haunted him — her dark flashing eyes were ever before him.

The scene of misery into which Mrs. Brown had forcibly dragged him, drove everything else from his mind. His sisters were too much occupied to notice his disturbed demeanour; they were talking eagerly, and strangely enough, as he chanced to turn towards them, their words seemed to be of his thoughts.

He roused himself, and heard them speak distinctly of a drunken woman, sick children, and a beautiful girl. He

rose and went straight up to them and said, "What is that, Anna? Of what are you speaking?"

Anna, pleased to find her brother an interested listener, smiled and answered, "Oh, while you were nodding over your book, I was speaking of the beautiful and stirring sermon we have heard. Oh, Jacob! what you have missed!"

"Tut tut," he said, quickly, "I thought you were speaking of a wretched woman and a girl—but I suppose I was hearing my own thoughts. I have something to tell you,—something for you to give your attention to, sister," he added, placing himself in front of Miss Russell.

She shifted her spectacles and said, "Well, Jacob, and what is it? Have you heard of a girl?"

"Yes—no—that is, I have seen a girl certainly, and I can't get her out of my thoughts."

"Well, Jacob, you are a very peculiar person, very. I should never have expected you to trouble yourself about servants."

"I know nothing about servants, sister," he said, somewhat impatiently. "Hearken! I have seen a girl, a striking wan-faced creature, starving and sad-hearted;—two others very ill, if not dying, and a wretched, mistaken mother drowning grief in drink. Strangers from Liverpool;—put in here in that storm a month ago;—the husband a convict. Now, I want you to think of it, and decide what shall be done for them."

He spoke with earnest animation, and laid his hand on Miss Russell's shoulder, as if to enforce attention. Anna jumped up, clapping her hands, and actually dancing about like a gleeful child.

"How singular! how odd!" she exclaimed; "what a

coincidence! Why, Mr. Lewis has been here, telling us of these very people. He always finds out misery, dear, excellent man! And you, Jacob—you, of all people—how was it you knew them?" Then, without waiting for an answer—"And I mean to convert the woman to teetotalism, and to educate the girl, and sister must look out her famous recipes to cure the children, and then perhaps we may have a bazaar or a raffle, or something, to raise money for them, poor souls!"

"How you do run on, Anna—really you talk nonsense," said Miss Russell. "If the girl were strong enough, which Mr. Lewis seemed to doubt, we might try her a month as housemaid;—that might be practicable and reasonable; and perhaps the parish may send on the woman to her friends; but as to converting her—I own, I have no faith in it."

Jacob here took another turn up and down the room, and sighed heavily, looking at his sisters as if desirous to read their hearts. Then he stirred the fire, which caused Miss Russell to remark that he had better leave it alone, there was quite fire enough for to-night. So he trod the floor once more heavily, till Anna said—"Oh, Jacob, how solemn and stupid you look; nothing ever animates you!"

"Sister," he said, not heeding this remark, and again laying his hand impressively on Miss Russell's shoulder—"perhaps you will deem me visionary and imprudent, but that child's face haunts me. She clung to me, I assure you—do you think we could take her into this house, and . . . ."

"Exactly what I observed just now. It would, doubtless, be an act of charity to take her; and I would, I am sure, put up with ignorance and excuse her, if she was not as strong as she should be. We must have another girl, Betty cannot do everything . . . ."

Jacob looked disappointed. "I think she will never do in that capacity, sister,—that is not what I intended to propose. She is very small and sickly looking,—quite a child; besides, it is quite evident they are gentlefolks .... I am sure I don't know if it could be—yet I should like to bring her here, and take care of her, if you think it can be done. But I see difficulties now—and—but I will consult Mr. Grant."

"Mr. Grant! Goodness! Jacob, what can he know? Isn't there dear Mr. Lewis at hand?" exclaimed Anna.

"Oh, Jacob can't move his little finger without Mr. Grant's leave, we know. Would that his influence had been always good!" said Miss Russell, rather severely.

Jacob seemed not to hear these remarks. He was again in deep thought.

"If I thought," he presently said—"if I was sure that either of us understood children ...."

"What can you mean, Jacob? What is there to understand in children? Really you are incomprehensible. As if I, the eldest of a large family, did not understand what a child is? *I* have not spent my life in dreaming. No; I pretty well understand children, and men and women too."

"It would be pleasant to have a child about the place," said Jacob, as if speaking to himself. "I always think the children on the quay look bright and pleasant—like wild flowers or sunbeams,—only I don't like to hear them crying; but I suppose this one is too old for that ...."

"I would soon whip that out of her," remarked Miss Russell, severely.

"I wonder if she would be happy here," continued Jacob, in the same musing tone.

"Happy! Oh, to be sure. I do hope we shall have her,"

exclaimed Anna. "I should like to adopt her. I could educate her; it would be quite the realisation of one of my dreams, to have some one to train; and how devoted and grateful she would be."

Jacob looked up at Anna brightly. "Yet, Anna, we must not overlook the difficulties and objections."

"There can be none, Jacob."

"Her father was, I learned, a solicitor," said the brother; "this woman is her step-mother. They may have friends who will not consent to such an arrangement. Then, from what I saw and hear, the mother would not be easy to deal with, and the girl may have her humours and fancies; indeed, I quite think she has, from her expression; her dark eyes flash wonderfully at times." He spoke in an earnest, low voice, conscientiously bringing up every objection he could think of, now that he met with a little sympathy and encouragement.

"I did not know that you ever noticed if a person's eyes were black or blue, Jacob. Really you are coming out," said Anna.

"As to humours and fancies," remarked Miss Russell, "if she comes here, she must shake them off. As to her gentility, the less said the better. If they are really so very destitute, she may be thankful to be brought up as a servant in a quiet, respectable family. . . . I should not mind undertaking it. She could sleep with Betty, and by great saving and economy, I daresay we shall not feel the expense much; but I will consent to nothing in a hurry."

"Certainly not, sister. I feel it is a subject to be well weighed. You are very good not to put it down altogether. Perhaps you will see the parties, and judge for yourself? As to the expense, certainly I must tell you that there is a great

chance that the *Albatross* is wrecked—still—we have ample means. Surely we can afford it."

"So you always say. You are the most reckless, extravagant person I ever saw, Jacob. You always have been so, and will be to the end of the chapter. However, I don't wish to begin on that subject now."

"Let us settle it at once," said Anna; "that is, if Mr. Lewis approves—and I think he was hinting it to-night—and the mother consents. It would be so delightful to have a little protegée, and every one wondering and talking; and then what a comfort it will be when we are all old—she will be so grateful!"

"That is what I fear," interrupted Jacob. "She may not be grateful. We ought not to look for it—that is, build on it at all. But I will ask Mr. Grant."

"Mr. Grant again!" said Anna. "Well, Jacob, if I were you, I would not be quite so ready to publish my good deeds or intentions. What can it be to Mr. Grant? Why talk of it at all, except to Mr. Lewis? However, I am tired. Good night."

Jacob rose, as was his custom, to give his sisters the parting kiss. To-night it was warmer than usual, and Jacob's "good nights," were always warm. It seemed to be the one point to which all the kind, unexpressed feelings of the day rallied. He never said more than "good night;" but Betty declared, "that it was for all the world like a prayer or a blessing."

Miss Russell stayed a little behind, to put out the extra candle, and to tell Jacob that no more fire was necessary; adding, that if he really wished to be charitable, he must learn to be prudent and economical; and then he was left

to his usual silence, and to gaze at the few remaining hot embers.

Anna's speech, so like a reproof, had staggered him a little, and had caused a slight flush to pass over his face. For one moment he resolved not to consult Mr. Grant. He felt that if he had a house of his own, he should not hesitate to take the girl at once, to take her out of wretchedness and provide for her education. But Jacob did not consider himself independent, and as he again and again thought over the affair, so many difficulties and doubts arose, that he returned to his first resolve, to see his friend Grant the next morning, and take counsel with him, who alone knew his position.

Many years ago, Jacob had been the means of his sister's losing a fortune of three or four thousand pounds.

It had always been understood that a great-uncle would leave this sum to her. Jacob was not celebrated for business-like habits, and it was unfortunately left to him to manage the will. Jacob was in those days a procrastinator—he delayed—and the old uncle died suddenly. The money all went to a nearer relative, who, though already rich, craved more.

Jacob said little, but felt much.

He resolved to devote his whole life to his injured sister. She was bitterly disappointed; all the more so, from having had a long struggle in her youth against poverty, for the father's affairs had been in an embarrassed state, from which she principally rescued them. It soured a not naturally sweet temper; but let her say what she would, and be as stinging and bitter as she might, Jacob prayed that he might bear it meekly. He thought he owed this to her. Miss Russell and Anna had a little money of their own, but it

was his pleasure to consider them as portionless, and dependent on his exertions. He was in a good business, and, though it was sadly against the grain, from that time he set himself to work early and late, and having good abilities, he succeeded in gaining a comfortable income. He annually put by a sum of money in his sisters' names, and gave the rest into their management. All this made him hesitate, and scruple to propose a plan which he felt conscious he so eagerly desired to try. And now that he had spoken, he felt that their views about it were widely different from his own. Then, again, perhaps the child might not be happy—might not like leaving home. After all, was it right to ask it? Home! Could it be called home? And then those large, dark eyes, that seemed to flash with anger at the mother's words, and afterwards looked so tender, though dimmed with tears, as she laid her head down and cried for her father—all that scene—when he had caressed her, and she had clung to him—arose vividly, and Jacob's heart warmed to the poor child.

But it was cold and the candle waxing low, so he went to bed, perhaps to dream on the same subject.

CHAPTER IV.

TAKING COUNSEL.

Mr. Russell was an early riser. His usual habit was to walk to the windmill by the cliff path before breakfast. He was a great walker, and every nook, lane, and dell within miles of the place was known to him. He walked alone, and was altogether said to be solitary in his habits, and although he often watched the children he met, he seldom found courage to address them. There was also another early riser and pedestrian at Wareham, a cousin by marriage of the Russells; but Mr. Mitchell's walks were generally confined to the streets or the promenade. He never failed to walk to the inn and see the coach arrive and depart; he was always to be seen near the reading-room or at market, whereas Mr. Russell rather avoided such haunts, and liked better to roam over the downs, or take long rounds in the leafy lanes.

On this morning he turned towards the steep hill which led to the Rectory. By the inn he met Mr. Mitchell, with his hands in his breeches-pockets.

"Good morning, Russell! What's the matter, that you change your morning road, hey? Precious dirty, isn't it?

but the rain is cleared off. Going to the Rectory? Bless me! it is hardly worth running a coach. Not a soul, I declare." And finding Jacob not inclined to chat, he sauntered up to the inn-door, and allowed Mr. Russell to continue his walk, which he did with rapid steps, and like one rather afraid of pursuit.

If there was anything that Jacob dreaded, it was to stand the fire of cross-questioning with which both Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell were wont to salute their friends. He harboured no ill-will against them, but he sometimes descended to little stratagems to avoid meeting them.

Just now he particularly disliked the idea of being examined, so he walked at a vigorous step, which would soon distance Mr. Mitchell, and having cleared the houses, he turned to take breath and look at the beautiful view—the calm sea stretching out widely, and the down-covered cliffs breaking the line with soft undulation, while the grey moth-like fishing-boats dotted the waters. There was the quay, too, just visible, and the chimney of Mrs. Brown's house. This urged him on again, and thoughts and memories, generally buried deep in his mind, arose with strange power—so much so, that he paused outside the Rectory-gate to compose himself, and bring back his ideas to the present moment. "It has strangely upset me," he said to himself; "reminding me of a boyish dream, and making me long now to have a child at my knees—a child's voice in the house. It would make us all young again."

Mr. Grant was in the garden, superintending the transplanting of shrubs, his coat-sleeves turned back, and trowel in hand. They had been friends from early youth, and Mr. Grant was Jacob's only friend now; though possessing similar tastes

in some things, he was a great contrast in manner and character.

Mr. Grant was hearty and somewhat noisy in manner, a little spare, wiry man, hard-headed and warm-hearted, full of energy and activity.

He soon left his shrubs to listen and advise. At first he looked surprised and grave, then burst into joyous laughter at the idea of a child at Queen's Terrace. "My dear fellow, excuse me, I know you would delight in it—she—(is it a he or a she?)—would share with the cat all that you can spare from book and counting-house. You will never contradict her, and your sisters will make up for it in your absence, and drill her to perfection. Seriously, though, I like the notion. It will do you all good, and, as you say, who have you to spend money on? There is, however, one thing, as you well know, I desire more for you, Jacob. Friend, friend, why not marry?"

"Never! You know I have good reasons, Grant, even if I desired it; which I never shall again. The time is past. Never."

"You are a good fellow, Jacob." Mr. Grant spoke in a subdued tone then; after a pause, in his own quick way he added—"Supposing that the friends consent—and I advise you to get a written agreement of promise not to interfere—you mean really to adopt this child and educate her; and then,—what are your views afterwards?"

"I really hardly know. My present object would be to take her from starvation and great misery. I have hardly looked beyond; but if my life is spared, my wish would, of course, be to provide for her."

"It is an odd fancy, isn't it? But come in and have some breakfast, and talk the matter over with my wife."

Mr. Russell had taken the precaution of leaving word with Betty, that he might possibly not be at breakfast, so he felt free to accept the invitation.

Mrs. Grant was a quiet, gentle, and sensible woman, and very fond of her husband's friend.

She listened to the proposal and tale of misery with serious attention, but was not at all in favour of the child's being transplanted to Queen's Terrace, even if her friends allowed it. She smiled as she said it was rather a romantic idea—all got up in such a hurry too. She thought it might be far from desirable to remove the child from her natural home and protectors. She had a mother?—well, a stepmother—and a father, probably of a bad character. How were they sure that the woman's story was true, and that they were not impostors altogether? It would be easier even if she were an orphan, and quite friendless.

Then, again, Mrs. Grant was not sure that, kind and good as the Miss Russells might be, they were exactly the persons to like the charge, or fitted for it. . . .

"I see it all, Mrs. Grant. The objections are insurmountable," said Jacob, rather sadly. "Such staid and rather quaint and ancient folks as we are, could not make a happy home for a child. And I quite see that it would be better for me to give them money, and perhaps help them in educating her themselves. Indeed, I thank you for stating the objections so calmly and forcibly. I quite give it up. It was a hasty idea, formed from the impulse of the moment; falling in also with a wish I have sometimes vaguely indulged. I quite give it up."

Mrs. Grant looked at him, as if wishing to read his heart, for the sad tone in his voice struck her, particularly when

he placed his hand on her own little girl's head, and half sung,

"Crabbed age and youth cannot live together."

Still the subject was canvassed in all its probable bearings till breakfast was over, and Jacob bade his friends good-bye.

He went straight to the counting-house, and was soon deep in business.

At dinner time he wore a cheerful and satisfied air, as he accosted his sisters with—

"Well, don't trouble yourselves further about my last night's whim. I quite see that it is impracticable, and have given it up."

"Jacob!" exclaimed Miss Russell, "you are the most peculiar man I ever met with! This is fantastical perversity in you. Just because we have settled it one way, you go the other. This is of course Mr. Grant's doing: he is ever ready to advise opposition to me."

"My dear sister," uttered Jacob, in surprise; "I assure you I had no idea . . . ."

"Last night," she interrupted with asperity, "you were mad about it; and now that I have settled it—smoothly and properly—you oppose it. Of course, if you object, we cannot have the child."

"Oh, Jacob," said Anna; "pray don't upset our delightful scheme, all so nicely settled by dear Mr. Lewis! We have been there, Jacob—seen the horrid woman and the children; and she, the mother, consents, and is so grateful, poor soul; after all, it is misery which makes her so bad. And the child—really she is very pretty—or rather would be so, if her hair was cut and her clothes tidy—and I am sure she has character, and that her forehead is intellectual. . . ."

"Well, Anna, never mind all that. It is not to be. You are to be disappointed. We had better send word to Mr. Lewis at once, that he may tell the poor woman," said Miss Russell.

"Sister," said Jacob, with a look of wonder; "really I beg your pardon; I had no notion that you desired it, or that you had taken any steps in the matter. If I gave it up, it was against my inclinations, and because I could not blind my eyes to objections—which—besides, I assure you I thought that you did not approve of it, and Mrs. Grant seemed to think it a great risk; and I was conscious of wishing it so very much too."

"Mrs. Grant, forsooth! and what right can she have to interfere with us? Supposing that Anna and I choose to burthen ourselves with an unfortunate child and save her from vice, what is that to Mrs. Grant?"

"And how funny," put in Anna; "you give it up because you wished it so much! What can you mean, Jacob?"

"You mistake, you mistake," said Jacob; "and indeed, if, on further consideration, you judge it right, I am sure I am ready—and I will do all I can."

"You need do nothing! It shall cost us nothing extra, and it is only on trial. Leave the child to us, and whatever you do, don't teach her any of your own peculiar ways; believe me, Jacob, you are very peculiar."

To this Jacob made no reply. The charge was so often repeated and was so vague, that it ceased to affect him. Indeed, he had come to construe it into a kind, sisterly way of veiling over his real defects. So he ate his dinner in silence, while listening to Anna's highly coloured and wordy description of their morning's visit to Mrs. Brown's lodgers.

The Miss Russells had gone with Mr. Lewis directly after breakfast. They found Mrs. Nairn with the baby on her lap. She was dressed in what had once evidently been handsome clothes;—her countenance was hollow and ghastly, telling too plainly of her wretched habits, which Mrs. Brown described as so bad, that almost everything they had, consisting of good clothes and books, and some trinkets, had been sold or pawned, while the children suffered from actual lack of bread.

One child sat beside the bed of her sick brother. She was singularly striking—with small classic features and a dark flashing eye, which gave too much expression for such a child. A profusion of long black hair, fine and soft as silk, fell, uncared for, over her neck and shoulders, and partly screened her pale face as she stared at the strangers.

Mrs. Nairn burst into tears, and told the same story they had before heard; saying she had been cruelly deserted by an extravagant, reckless husband, and was now on her way to Exeter, which was her native place, and where she fully expected to find assistance from a relation. The vessel in which they had sailed, had put into Wareham from stress of weather, and then she and two children had been too ill to move since. She hinted that, from peculiar circumstances, she was in great need of money just then, but did not always expect to be so. She said that it was hard upon her to have to maintain her two step-children, and that if their father's friends did not come forward to help, she did not know what she should do. When Mr. Lewis hinted at the possibility of some one taking the eldest girl to educate, she called her a "sweet darling," and declared she could never consent to part with her "dear Janet." But the ladies observed that

"Janet" seemed to shudder, and draw away as she spoke, with a look of dislike blended with scorn.

"Is that your brother?" asked Miss Russell, addressing the child.

"Yes, my own brother."

"Is he very ill? what is the matter with him?" asked Anna.

"I don't know," she said, looking hard at Anna; and then drawing closer to her brother, she drew her hand under his head and whispered—"Poor Tom! poor Tom!"

After a short consultation, and some questions addressed by Miss Russell to Mrs. Nairn, Mr. Lewis cleared his throat and oratorically made a proposition to Mrs. Nairn, of relieving her for a time from the care of the eldest girl, adding that the excellent ladies present would take care and teach her good things, and bring her up in a respectable way, so that hereafter she might gain her own livelihood.

Mrs. Nairn was profuse in thanks; she was sure that her husband would be glad to get the girl educated. It would be losing her right hand, particularly now the boy was so ill;—yet, she was not selfish—she should gladly and thankfully embrace their kind offer.

Then Mr. Lewis spoke to the child, and asked her if she should like to go with the kind ladies.

She cast a sidelong look at her mother, and answered "Yes;" then turning towards Tom, she corrected herself and said, "No, she would not leave Tom," while one or two large tears glided silently down her face, and she added, in almost a whisper, "Papa told me never to leave Tom."

"She is a strange child," said the mother. "I am sorry to say, she has been over-indulged by an injudicious father."

Then turning fiercely towards the girl, she upbraided her, in a severe tone, for ingratitude and hypocrisy—"pretending to care for Tom or any one but herself!"

Miss Russell stopped this, by begging for a minute's conversation in private with Mrs. Nairn. What was said or what had induced Miss Russell to be herself so eager to take charge of the child, seemed rather a surprise to Anna; but she was too glad to find her sister willing to scrutinize her motives.

Anna spoke kindly to the children, and after Mr. Lewis had signified to Janet that she was to go to Queen's Terrace when sent for, to be fed, clothed, and taught at the good ladies' expense, they took their leave.

The sick boy moaned as they shut the door, and slid his hot, thin hand into his sister's. "Don't be afraid, Tom," she whispered; "I will not go, Tom; they sha'n't drag me away alive. I'll stay with you, don't fear!"

"When will you like to have Janet?" inquired Mr. Lewis of the ladies, as they wended homewards.

"Pray don't call her by that fanciful name!" said Miss Russell. "Call her Jane!"

"Oh, sister, how can you? I was rejoicing over such a sweet name—Janet! It is so like a Scotch poem; and she is very pretty and clever looking."

"Her hair must be cut," said the elder sister, decidedly.

"Mr. Lewis," said Anna; "you must give me your opinion on education. I should wish to be guided by you in every respect."

"But when is she to come?" repeated Mr. Lewis.

"Oh, I must tell Jacob first. And I should like to be sure that the woman leaves this place. I don't like her looks, and we can't be saddled with all the family."

"That boy can't last long," said Mr. Lewis. "After that is over, she means to leave, she says, and perhaps that will be the time for the girl to come to you. I wonder what Mr. Russell will say to it?"

Mr. Russell said nothing more that day, but his evening's reading was not prosperous. He appeared thoughtful and anxious.

At last, when Betty was taking away the tea-things, Anna said, "Oh, Betty, I have such news to tell you; we are going to adopt a child."

"No, Anna, pray be correct. It is expressly stated to her mother that we only take her for a time on trial," put in the elder sister.

"Well, well! any way, a child is coming here, a very pretty one; and you will have to look after her, you know."

Betty opened her round eyes with surprise. "Dear me, a child here, Miss Anna! No doubt a deed of charity. Well, bless us! ye 're very good, and I am sure if it will add to yours and missis's and master's happiness I am glad; and sure it may. A child's a gladsome way about it, and may bring ye interest and cheer ye up a bit."

"It will bring trouble and care," remarked Miss Russell. "To each in the family it will only bring trouble and labour, for we are not to pamper and indulge this child, but discipline her mind. I hope we shall try to do our duty by her."

Betty curtsied at this short harangue, and Jacob half whispered "Amen."

Shortly afterwards Mr. Lewis came to say that he could not induce the girl to leave her brother. He never saw such a "spirit" in his life! but he added, the more he saw of

the mother, the more urgent did he find it to remove the child. For besides her intemperance and improvidence, it was evident that there was no good understanding between this girl and her step-mother. Mrs. Nairn had shown him letters which corroborated her story as to the main facts, and she repeated her promise not to interfere at all with Janet when she left her.

All this was addressed to the Miss Russells—Mr. Lewis not noticing the brother after returning Jacob's first courteous salutation.

Then followed a little Wareham gossip, till Mr. Lewis started up, having been beguiled, he said, into forgetting an engagement.

CHAPTER V.

AFRAID OF THE DARK.

It was a week after the preceding events that Mr. Lewis paid another visit to the Nairns.

He brought tracts for the mother, and asked after the sick children. Some fine hot-house grapes lay by the boy's bedside, and there was cold chicken on the table. Mr. Lewis noted these things, as well as a general improvement in the neatness of the room. Then he called Janet to stand before him, and putting aside her long hair, advised that it should be cut. But she held it tightly and looked almost fierce, as Mrs. Nairn said, "It would be a good thing when she was under some authority. She couldn't manage her!"

Mr. Lewis shook his head, and spoke of the sin of a rebellious and proud temper. Once the child made an attempt to draw away her hands, which he held, and looked eagerly towards her brother's bed; but Mr. Lewis said she must stay where she was, and listen to what he had to say. He was sorry to see such an impatient disposition, and much more to the same effect.

He stayed a long time, and when he went Janet sprang back to the couch like a wild animal let loose from confinement,

and Mrs. Nairn muttered something, very like a "Thank goodness!"

The sick boy moved restlessly and looked excited. He moaned too, and fixed his hollow, glassy eyes on his sister's face so imploringly that she whispered—"I am here, Tom. I am here; I am not going away."

"Is *she* here?" asked Tom.

"Hush!—yes; but I think she is going out. Oh, Tom, you are very ill!"

Mrs. Nairn here came to the bedside and felt his brow and hand. She shook her head and said, "It will not be long! You take care of him and Ellen, Janet, while I go out. I will try and get something to do him good."

The other child lay quietly, playing with a doll, and the baby was asleep. Tom threw about his arms restlessly and tried to speak, but his lips seemed glued together. Janet moistened them with water, and then he said—"What did she mean, Janet? am I going to die?"

"Oh, I don't know—they say so," she said, with quivering lips.

"But where am I going, Janet?—In a pit?"

"I don't know—I don't know, Tom."

"But don't let them put me in the earth, Janet. I don't like it—I won't go!" and he caught his sister's hand.

She gulped down the rising emotion, and in a low, thrilling voice said—"You won't know, Tom, if you are dead. Perhaps you will be happier! You won't be afraid if I sit with you, will you?"

Her eyes were not fierce now, but wonderfully soft and tender, and she drew yet closer to him, shuddering.

"I wish you could die too. Oh, Janet! I wish you would

come with me, and then I shouldn't mind the dark; will it be dark,—very dark?"

"You will never be hungry any more;—never be in pain any more; and, Tom, you'll never be beat, and never hear *her* voice," Janet said, in the same soft, clear whisper, her chest heaving with her efforts to suppress her tears and sobs.

"Can't you come, Janet?"

"I wish I could! Oh, I wish I could! I shouldn't be afraid."

"Will papa know, Janet? Oh, Janet, hold me tight!"

But she could not answer. She burst into tears; and, losing all self-control, she threw her arms round him:—

"Oh, Tom, don't go from me; don't die! Oh, Tom, Tom! what shall I do—all alone? Oh, papa, papa!"

But a husky, rattling sound in Tom's breathing stopped her plaints. She rose; and the change in his countenance horrified her. His forehead was so cold and damp, his eyes so fixed, his breathing so hard. Quickly she raised his head, and spoke in a quiet tone:—

"Tom, dear! Tom! I didn't mean to hurt you: don't be frightened! Look at me, Tom, do!"

And she stroked his hand and kissed his brow. He turned his eyes once towards her, and tried to speak; but no words came. That frightful breathing—how should she relieve him?

Ellen, the other child, sat up in bed, and stared with frightened looks.

"Oh, Ellen! call Mrs. Brown," said Janet.

But Ellen moved not. Only dropping her doll, she sat, staring and stupified.

The breathing became fainter, and his head fell more

heavily on Janet's shoulder, and his eyes were shut: perhaps he slept!

Then all was still—so still, that Janet trembled. She did not stir, though ready to sink from the strained and painful position she was in. She held in her breath, and gazed with dry eyes on the poor, pinched face, hoping that he was easier, but with a vague fear at her heart that this was not sleep. Ellen lay back again, and soon fell asleep. The candle was dying out; but Janet dared not stir.

When Mrs. Nairn returned, she came to the bedside, and gave a loud scream, which brought up Mrs. Brown, and roused the baby, who began to cry. Then there was much bustle and stir, and they removed Janet, and were busy about the bed, which made Janet feel sick with an undefined terror, though she never once looked towards them.

It was a long, dreary night. Every shadow in the room made Janet shudder; but Mrs. Brown was kind, and remained there. The bed was covered over with a sheet; and, much as she longed to do so, Janet dared not even now look that way.

Mrs. Nairn, after violent hysterics, had fallen asleep. Her snoring and the baby's breathing were the only sounds.

Janet sat in a corner, her head resting on her hands, having resisted all entreaties to go into Mrs. Brown's room, and lie down. She did not speak or cry, but, as morning dawned, she fell into a doze, with her head on the chair. She was awakened by the sound of footsteps. They were putting Tom into his coffin. A sudden pang seized her. Tom was really going from her for ever! She was about to cry aloud; but seeing Mrs. Nairn looking at her, she buried her head again, and resolutely repressed her sobs.

Mr. Lewis came to inquire; but Janet would not look up or make any answer.

Later in the day, Mr. Russell called, having heard of the boy's death from Mrs. Brown.

After some hesitation and awkwardness, he laid a note on the table, hoping Mrs. Nairn would pardon him, but he supposed she would wish for mourning, and might not find it convenient to get it; then turned away abruptly from her thanks, and stroked Janet's head, as she still sat crouched on the floor.

She looked up a little; but tears rolled so fast down her face, that she soon hid it again.

In a few days Tom was buried. Mrs. Nairn was too ill to go to the funeral, she said. Janet went, and Mr. Russell was there. He was buried at Old Wareham; and when the earth rattled on the coffin, Janet turned to him with so piteous a cry, that Jacob put his arm round her and led her away.

They walked back together. He did not speak, and she cried all the way. As they drew near the house, he said—

"Do you think you can come to our house now?"

She looked up into his face steadily, but could not answer.

"Will you like to come now, or wait?" he again asked.

"With you?"

"Yes. Should you like to return first and see your mother?"

"No; oh, no."

After another silence, he felt her hand tremble, and then she said, trying to stop crying—

"Will papa know?"

"Certainly; we will write to him soon. Do you like to leave your mother?

"She isn't my mother: I don't like her. Tom doesn't like her—I mean didn't." And then came another burst of grief.

"Poor child! poor child!" said Jacob, feeling so uncomfortable and unhappy, that he unconsciously quickened his pace, that he might give her up to other care and comfort. "For,"—he thought,—"he didn't understand that kind of thing; he only made her worse!"

He left the child with his sisters, and went to his work, first calling on Mrs. Nairn, to tell her that Janet was safe at her new home.

This seemed to be a relief to the mother; and she said that, as Ellen was much better, she intended leaving Wareham the next day. She gave Mr. Russell a direction which would find her husband, and said she should write at once. He would vex terribly at Tom's death, for he idolised those two children; indeed, she must say, very unjustly so, neglecting the others, and making favourites of them.

Miss Anna Russell brought out pictures and some old scrap-books, to amuse "her little pet," but Janet cared not to look at them; and when Miss Russell spoke in what was intended for a kind manner, of the folly of giving way to weeping, and telling her she must rouse herself and be thankful that her brother was at rest, Janet cried the more; till they both got rather tired of her and sent her to Betty.

As she went out of the room, Miss Russell remarked—

"After all, Anna, we must not have her too much with us: it will not do to give her high notions. I am afraid we shall have some difficulty with her. She has evidently a way of her own."

"That is only character. I am not sorry to see that," said Anna, with a little nod.

Betty succeeded better than her ladies; for in an hour's time Janet had ceased crying, and was sitting very patiently, though with a sad look, nursing the cat.

Mr. Russell had to give some orders about his boots to Betty, so he came into the kitchen in the course of the evening.

"Ah! you and puss are going to be friends, I see," he said. Then he gave his directions to Betty. "Take good care of this little maiden," he added, stroking Janet's head, with a quiet smile; and he left them.

"Little maiden!" repeated Janet, with a half-smile, and as if amused. "What a funny man he is! Is he the master here?"

"Bless you! yes; and the best of mortals—the kindest gentleman ever breathed! The ladies is very good, too—very; but master's above all praise! And now, my dear, do 'ee try to eat this cake, and take this special cup of tea; 'twill do ye good."

Before bed-time, the child was on Betty's lap, talking freely, telling her of "home and papa," and then listening to Betty's praises of her missis and master, till sleep weighed down her eyes and Betty carried her up to bed. She slept in Anna's room, and rather disturbed that lady by her dreams and incoherent sleep-speeches.

CHAPTER VI.

BLACK MONDAY.

Miss Russell had one or two fixed ideas, over which she brooded and theorized, till they were, to use a familiar phrase, a part of herself. She never lost sight of them; they formed the motive for her actions, and were the keystone of all her castles in the air, whenever she permitted herself to build any.

Never was diplomatist more wary or circumspect than Miss Russell in the matter of Janet Nairn. She dropped the subject of bringing her up as a servant for a time, only that she might make her plans more sure hereafter.

It was an excellent opportunity. A young girl, with no bad tricks to unlearn, and so dependent that there was no fear of that oft-repeated "month's warning," which had deprived her of so many of her pupils.

"Ah!" she said to herself, as she silently watched Anna's preparations and Anna's notes to Mr. Lewis—"Ah! let Anna effervesce on a little; and Jacob, he will glow for awhile, and then his blaze of energy will die out. My time will come, I know. They will get tired; and then I shall take the child, and teach her properly. As for Jacob, it will be

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like everything else—music, languages, and those horrid experiments, and his carpentering mania—red-hot for a time, and then given up. By-the-bye, I wonder what is his hobby now? I shrewdly suspect something goes on in that study of his at the counting-house; he is afraid of me, and keeps it secret, whatever it is."

And here Miss Russell sighed deeply, and gazed very sadly on the carpet; so much so, as to cause Anna to look up from her delicate pink-paper note, and say—

"Your eyes trouble you, I fear, sister. Shall I draw down the blind?"

"No, no! never mind my eyes. What matters about my eyes?—who cares about them?"

Anna looked astonished, but did not answer, and continued her writing. Every day some note was sent to Mr. Lewis. He did not answer them; but it was her pleasure to communicate her "little plans" to him, for his kind correction or approval.

Miss Russell only smiled, in a dreary, contemptuous way at this. In her secret heart, she had no very great respect for Mr. Lewis's judgment. Her support of him altogether was strange, one of those contradictions which ordinary by-standers had no clue to. Any one knowing Miss Russell's life, however, and its few strongly-marked points, would place her apparent liking for, and support of, Mr. Lewis to an old feeling of jealous dislike to the Rector, Mr. Grant, Jacob's one friend.

Occupied, to her entire liking, by the composing and sending these dainty notes to her "adviser," Anna had the forbearance to take her brother's advice, and wait awhile before she commenced her educational labours, that "Janet might grow

accustomed to her new home;" the only step she took being to feel the child's head carefully, and note down any phrenological peculiarities, by which she meant to be considerably guided.

So Janet ranged about the house pretty much as she liked, chattering to Betty, or playing with the cat, and keeping as much out of the parlour as she could. Her spirits soon rose to gaiety; but, as Betty failed not to remark, there was something not "altogether common about her."

"Why, sir," she said to her master, "she'll fix her flashing eyes on you with the look of a tiger, and, all at once, will turn off to the lovingest face I ever saw."

Like most other children, Janet liked to fancy herself useful, which Miss Russell observed with satisfaction. Amongst other things, she carried up Mr. Russell's shoes of a morning, and placed them outside his door. Once he came out as she was there, and said "Thank'ee, little maiden; it is good of you to be useful." On which she bounded, two stairs at once, down into the kitchen, to tell Betty that "Mr. Jacob had spoken to her, and smiled at her!"

She used, after that, to watch for his return home, standing half hid in the cloaks and coats in the passage, till he came close to hang up his hat, and then she slid her hand into his silently, and he generally led her as far as the parlour-door, but not farther; for, if he attempted to bring her in, she ran away, with an arch, shy look, and took refuge with Betty.

This went on for some little time, and then, as Miss Russell foretold, Jacob seemed to relapse into his usual dreamy, silent and abstracted habits—at least, he ceased to express anxiety about the success of the plan; though, if ever Janet

chanced to be in the room of an evening, he might have been seen taking quiet observations, as if he was studying some new phenomenon in natural history.

But Janet was so still and so grave when in the parlour, that there was little opportunity for understanding her.

Anna pronounced her to be a quiet, gentle creature.

"Don't be too sure of that, Miss Anna," answered Mr. Lewis. "I have seen her in another mood."

"Oh, I am not afraid. I like a little 'character.' She doesn't seem at all stupid."

At last the day arrived—the day on which Janet's liberty ended; the Monday, the truly black Monday, on which she was destined to begin a course of study!

Miss Anna called her into the parlour after breakfast, and began an examination as to her attainments—

"Now, sit still, dear, and pray put back your hair."

"Her hair shall positively be cut off," remarked Miss Russell—luckily she did not see the flashing look which this called up, for she was knitting, and had dropped a stitch; besides which, the obnoxious hair had fallen over Janet's face, and veiled her fiery eyes.

"Now, dear," began Anna—and quickly Janet turned towards her, and then dropped her eyes on the floor, the long eyelashes sweeping on her pale cheeks. "How old are you, by-the-bye, Janet?" said Anna.

"Past twelve."

"That I don't believe," ejaculated Miss Russell, and taking off her spectacles, while she measured her with her eye from head to foot. "It is quite impossible; you are not more than ten."

"I am twelve," repeated Janet, with a careless shake of her hair.

"Oh, then of course you ought to know a great deal! But, however, dear, never mind your ignorance and backwardness; perseverance and diligence will do wonders."

Anna, however, found that Janet was not so very ignorant. She knew a little French, and could read and write English very fairly, and answered some common questions in history and geography, readily enough.

"Who taught you?" said Anna. "You must have been to school?"

"Yes, for a little time; and I learnt music there. Oh, I am so fond of music! But I didn't learn much else there."

"Music, indeed! very pretty, truly," muttered Miss Russell over her knitting.

"Did your mother—your stepmother—teach you, then?"

Janet fixed her eyes on Anna's face with a look of astonishment at this question. "No—no, not her—papa; he taught me!" and her lips quivered a very little as she spoke.

"Can't you call him father, Jane?" said Miss Russell. "But, indeed, the less his name is mentioned the better. It is no honour to you, being connected with a convict. You must banish him from your mind."

Janet's cheeks glowed with passion at these words; her breast heaved, and then, with a convulsive kind of sob in her throat, she rushed out of the room and downstairs, without further ceremony, and seating herself on her favourite stool in the kitchen, she cried violently.

After the first astonishment at such an unexpected proceeding, Anna meditated writing to Mr. Lewis to ask advice, how to treat this unlooked-for trait in her pupil's character.

But Miss Russell, drawing in her lips with determination, laid down her knitting, and walked with stately steps into the kitchen.

"And pray, Jane, what do you mean by this?" she said, in a severe tone, which made Betty tremble. "Come up directly, miss, and beg pardon! Do you hear me? Your temper is high, it seems; but it must be broken." She paused, and then added—"I shall expect you to humble yourself, Jane, and make a proper apology for bouncing out of the parlour in that way. I am sorry to say it shows a great deal of pride and fantastical sensitiveness about you, which is quite out of place in your position—and, indeed, very troublesome and wrong in any one; therefore, it is my duty to correct you. I give you ten minutes; and if you persist in being naughty, I shall lock you up in the study till you yield."

Miss Russell walked away with the same slow and measured steps.

"Miss Janet, my dear, do'ee say you're sorry," whispered Betty, in her most persuasive manner. "Never be ashamed of owning you have done wrong."

But Janet pushed her away, and said, "She had done nothing wrong. She would not bear to hear her father insulted. She only wished she was a man; she would fight a duel, that she would!"

Betty was horrified, both at her words and at her excited gestures—the small, slight child, quivering with passion; her nostrils distended, and those wonderful eyes of hers seeming to flash fire.

Betty shed tears, but still persisted in coaxing saying that her missis was a right-down righteous lady, but never gave

in ; she was very stern—only, if Miss Janet would but say she was sorry for being so hasty. . . .

"No, never! Papa, my dear papa!" and here she burst into tears. "They may beat me," she sobbed, "and starve me—I know something of that. They don't know who they have to deal with. They'll never get anything out of me in that way."

The kitchen clock was now close on the time mentioned by Miss Russell, and again her step was heard. Stern enough she looked, standing in the doorway. Janet gave one hasty glance, and then buried her head in her lap and cried on.

"Well, Jane, the time is up! Are you going to make an apology?"

No answer ; only a sudden cessation of tears and sobs.

"Well, Jane?"

Still no answer ; but a resolute turning away from Betty's silent but expressive entreaties.

"Then come here, miss!" uttered Miss Russell, breaking down all her calm severity, and giving Janet a violent shake. "Come here," and she pushed her on before, and calling on Anna to assist, they forcibly dragged Janet upstairs, and locked her into the study.

The "study" was a dreary, uninhabited room, partly fitted up with bookshelves, which were now dismantled, Jacob having withdrawn his favourites to a more genial and undisturbed retreat. The room looked dusty and uncared for ; and there were heaps of old papers, and some articles of furniture, which had retired from business ; altogether it was as musty, dingy a place as could be desired for a prison.

Here Janet was shut in, to "examine her heart," as Anna told her. And here she remained the livelong day ; not the

least afraid, or the least sorry, as she assured Betty when her dinner was brought her.

It so happened that a press of business kept Jacob from dinner, in which case he was accustomed to have a little cold meat at tea-time. When he returned, missing Janet at her usual post by the coats, he asked for her, and looked very grave and uncomfortable when told where she was, and why she was there.

After some time he said, quietly, "We ought to be very careful not to hurt her feelings about her father, and also not to provoke her temper, which is doubtless hot. I should say, indeed, I fancy she has Southern blood in her."

"Southern blood, Jacob! Well, you are peculiar! Of course you will find excuses for her, and think me wrong; it is your way. But you can be no judge of how to train a child, and I do beg you will not interfere."

"Mr. Lewis says he will call in to-morrow and talk to her," said Anna. "He is particularly engaged this evening. His kind, gentle reasoning will soften her poor hard heart."

"A rod would do it far better," ejaculated Miss Russell, wrathfully.

At bed-time Miss Russell unlocked the study-door, and found Janet fast asleep on the rug. Betty carried her to bed, remarking, "What a feather of a thing it was!"

And thus ended the beginning of Janet's studies.

The next morning the child was walking rather disconsolately in the passage, not knowing whether the study or the parlour was to be her destination, and perhaps feeling that it would be very dismal to spend another long day with the old time-stained papers and rickety chairs, when Jacob came out of his room.

"Well, little maiden, I hope you are going to be good to-day? I don't like missing my evening welcome at all."

She looked steadfastly at him, and asked in a very low and humble voice, if she should be locked up to-day?

"That depends on yourself, my dear," he said gravely, and taking her hand. "Miss Russell is very firm, but if you say, just that you are sorry". . .

Janet's eyes were full of tears. "I don't like the study," she said; "but they behaved badly to me. *You* wouldn't say that!"

"My sister did not mean to offend you; at all events, as the youngest you must give up, you know. Go, and say you are sorry, and I shall see you in the hall to-night.'"

He smiled kindly on her and went away; and when she heard him shut the front door, she sat herself on the stairs, waiting there till Miss Russell came out. Then, with a determined manner and glowing face, she said, in a jerking and abrupt way, "I am sorry I was rude."

"Well, your manner is not very penitent, I must say; but, however, if you behave well all day, I shall believe that you are sorry. And now call Betty to me;" and Miss Russell passed on, giving no smile or look of encouragement. Yet was Miss Russell less severe and censorious that day, and she gave Janet a slice of cake after her lessons, which went off well.

CHAPTER VII.

A MORNING WALK AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

A FEW days passed very smoothly. Anna was pleased with her pupil's aptitude, and Janet was so docile and mild, they could hardly fancy her to be the same child as—"that little fury," as Miss Russell termed her. Miss Russell had been much occupied in cooking for a sick person—a thing she delighted and succeeded in—so that she did not notice Janet much.

One day Mr. Russell chanced to be in the room when Janet was reading. A windmill was mentioned, and Janet did not know what a windmill was—she had seen steam-mills, but never a windmill. Anna, who had lived near one all her life, thought this an unpardonable piece of ignorance, and tried to explain it. Jacob said nothing then; but the next morning, when Janet was placing his boots at his door, he came out, and said—"Should you like to see a windmill? Then make haste and get your bonnet on, and come with me; I am going there before breakfast."

Janet was half-wild with delight; and Betty was pleased, saying it would do her good to get the fresh air on the cliff; "and she must be sure," Betty added, "to behave very prettily, and not disturb the master, on no account."

Mr. Russell went on with his usual long and quick steps, and Janet had to run to keep at his side. When they were on the downs, close to the cliff, her pleasure was so great, that she could not keep straight in the path, but ran here and there, like a dog let loose and rejoicing in his freedom.

Jacob watched her with a quiet but amused and speculative wonder, his rather long and very fine hair waving in the breeze—his arched lips, not closed, as they generally were, as if in deep thought or under strict control, but forming into something very like a smile—while his grey eyes seemed to darken and deepen. As he breasted the wind, his massive figure was a great contrast to the small, slight girl who was now close to him, then dancing off for a flower, her cheeks coloured by the sea-breeze, and her long dark hair escaping from all Betty's "tidy" braids, and streaming over her little black cape.

When they had reached a particular spot, Mr. Russell stopped to look at the view, and he pointed out the old church-tower, which could be seen, half-hidden by trees; while below was the new chapel, and the neat "rows" and detached houses of New Wareham. The quay, too, could be seen, and at a little distance there was a brig, pitching on the bounding sea.

Janet slid her hand into his, and stood quite still, glancing up in his face, and then again looking at the vessel.

"Is that ship large enough to go far?" she presently asked, in a low voice.

"Pretty far. How far do you mean?"

She hesitated a little, and then said, "To the end of the world, sir."

"And where is that, do you think?"

"I don't know—but I mean a very long way off. Botany Bay, I mean," lowering her voice, so that he scarcely heard her. Then she looked up in her quick, searching way. "Papa is gone there. He went in a ship, they said. I hate the sight of ships and the sea now!" Mr. Russell did not speak, and presently she went on: "Why did they make him go away? If you had known him, you would have been so fond of him—he was so kind."

"I suppose he did something wrong—something against the laws, my poor child."

"I pon't know—I think he was always good. Every one, almost, loved him. And now they've taken him away; and Tom's gone—and—" But she could say no more; she burst into tears.

Mr. Russell looked at her in evident distress and perplexity. He was too shy, and too much unused to any demand on his sympathy, to know what to say or do; yet he felt strangely moved, and sighed as he wished he could comfort her.

"My dear, don't cry!"—but this seemed only to bring more sobs. "Poor little girl!" he said, putting his arm round her, and drawing her close to him, as if to shelter her from the wind; "it is very natural for you to feel sorry, I am sure; but I—we—my sisters and Betty—we will do all we can for you. It is sad to lose friends, but it is sometimes God's will that we should. He raises up others for us. And then, you see, Janet, it is good for us all to have our share of trouble here, that we may remember it is not our real home. To some trouble comes sooner, to some later."

She had checked her sobs now, and said, while crushing a thistle with her foot, "Have you got any trouble, sir?"

He smiled a little. "You need not call me sir. I want to be a friend to you, instead of—in the place of what you have lost." And he stroked back her hair, some of which had fallen over her face.

"But have you?" she persisted.

"What?—oh, have I any trouble, you wish to know. Well, yes, I have had some. You know, I have no father, or mother either, Janet; and my mother died when I was very young."

Janet drew a long sigh. "But you—great men don't want fathers and mothers, do they?"

"That's what you think! But great men do want people to love them, and to love. I believe every one in the world, more or less, wants that, Janet."

"Yes," she said, decidedly.

"Now let us go and see this wonderful windmill," he said. "It is going merrily in this wind."

Janet held his hand tightly, and he seemed to answer this clinging by pressing the small fingers gently, and, as Janet thought, speaking kinder than ever.

When all had been explained, and they were on their way back, she said abruptly, "I am like an orphan now."

"And if so, under the special care and promise of the Almighty, my dear; and, Janet, I must be a father to you."

"No," she said, half-shyly; "we can't have two fathers, can we? Papa is my father. But you are kind," she added, relentingly, and looking at him in a glad, gracious way, which moved him to the quick—"very kind; and I am sorry I have such a high temper. I want to please you, because—because I love you."

"Try to please all your friends, my dear, and then you

will please God. And"—he paused, and turned about, so as to look into her face—"Janet, if you know your temper is high, try—pray, to be made lowly; for God loves them that are meek."

Presently she glanced eagerly into his face: "Mr. Jacob!"

"Yes, my child."

"Do you—do you think you love me?"

"I think I do," he said, smiling.

"But you only *think* it; you are not sure."

"Do you care about it, little maiden?"

She hesitated, and then said, without looking at him:

"Yes, I care. I wish you could; but I don't suppose you can, for *she* said no one could, after they knew me."

"Well, we shall see—we shall learn to know each other by-and-by, Janet."

"Yes," she answered, in a musing tone, "we shall see. But, Mr. Jacob, I love you now."

"Do you, my dear?—do you?" Then, with a half-smothered sigh, he added: "I dare say it is likely, poor little soul!—poor little lonely heart! And I love you, child; and you may be a great blessing and comfort to our house, to us all—my sisters, I mean."

"Do the ladies want any comfort?" she asked, presently, and doubtfully.

"My sister is growing old," he said, not directly answering her question, but smiling in a peculiar way. "You can learn to be useful to her, and help her, and cheer the house."

"Can I? I had rather help you, though," she said, in a decided tone.

But Mr. Russell had fallen into one of his silent fits, and as she, for a moment, disengaged her hand to gather some

tempting flowers, he stood looking out on the sea, ruffled by the breeze into showers of diamond sparkles; nor did he again reply to her frequent, gentle, and soft chatter about the flowers and the sea-gulls. Very bright was her face when they reached No. 1; but as a cloud suddenly chases away the sun-streak from the ocean, so did their reception destroy the effects of that pleasant morning walk.

The room felt close after the fresh breeze, and Miss Russell's countenance prophesied a storm. Even Anna looked sharp and cross, and shook her ringlets, as if offended.

The bell was rung for prayers in silence; and then, when Janet was about to seat herself for breakfast, Anna bade her go and learn her lessons.

Janet stared, but did not move.

"Yes, Janet; duty before pleasure. You have chosen to walk, and as I expect your Scripture lesson and dates to be perfect by prayer-time, as you very well know, you must learn them now before you have any breakfast."

"It is my fault, I fear," said Jacob, in a deprecating tone. "Pray excuse her for this time. Our walk has given us an appetite."

"Then it will be all the greater punishment," said Miss Russell.

Janet said, "I am not at all hungry," and walked out of the room with an indescribable air of haughtiness.

Then both sisters attacked Jacob, telling him it was a most irregular and injudicious thing to interfere with the child. Was he to turn nursery-maid? It would not do at all. . . .

Jacob said, quietly, that he had never imagined he was doing harm, and merely wished to show her a windmill. Certainly, she had so much enjoyed the run, he thought

of taking her again; but, of course, he would not do so, if his sisters disapproved—looking at Miss Russell as he spoke. It was his habit to yield to her on almost all occasions; but he did so now with so much quiet kindness and firmness, and there was so little need for such a fuss, that Miss Russell, feeling a little ashamed, soon quieted down, and breakfast was proceeded with.

After awhile, Anna rose, saying she would carry Janet some bread-and-butter and tea. Jacob held the door open as she passed, and ventured to say, "Pray do not scold her, Anna. It is entirely my fault."

"Oh, Jacob!" said Miss Russell, who overheard him, "you are going to spoil that child! Remember your responsibility, Jacob. What says Scripture, 'Spare the rod,'—you know the rest. You have suffered all your life long from indulgence in childhood; you ought to be peculiarly careful."

"True, sister, very true—from self-indulgence. But don't blame my mother. The remembrance of her voice, her words, I do assure you, have had power over me, even when you least thought it. I have never suffered through her."

He said no more; but remained very grave, and took little notice of Janet for many days, except when she met him of an evening in the passage, and then it was generally confined to a warm, passionate embrace, from her running into his arms directly she saw him, and a quiet but tender kiss from him. Anna had the field apparently to herself; but another was watching warily for the convenient moment—and that moment arrived at last.

CHAPTER VIII.

A PITCHED BATTLE.

"Well, Jacob, how are ye?"

Mr. Russell turned from his long gaze at the flowing, splashing tide, as it dashed upwards, throwing its foam as far as the downs, and beheld his cousin by marriage, Mr. Mitchell.

He was a solicitor—a tall, thin, pale man, very good-tempered and very indolent, who left everything to his wife's management, except his geraniums.

"A full tide, Russell! What wind there was in the night! Mr. Lewis's chimney lost a few bricks, and Miss Rose's beautiful shrubs are quite destroyed, I hear. Not a passenger in or outside the coach to-day! And how are Cousin Anna and Miss Russell? And, by-the-bye, Jacob," tapping him on the back, "why, you've picked up a black-eyed damsel! Sly fellow, Jacob! Always were, you know, eh? But this girl, where did she come from? What are you going to do with her, eh?" Then, before Jacob had time to reply, "Bless my heart! fancy the spinster cousins teaching that child! She's a regular spirit, too, I hear."

"Who from?" interrupted Jacob.

"Oh, I'm sure I forget; but she was picked up out of some collier, wasn't she? Bless you! every one is talking of it and wondering. Why, I can only say a merchant must be a deal luckier than a solicitor, if you can afford to do all I hear you have done. Precious hard work it is, I can tell you, for us to keep above water. But come,—what so secret about? If she is proper, my girls will be glad to make her acquaintance."

"She is of respectable birth; but the family now are in reduced circumstances, and I—that is, my sisters—have received her into the house for a time."

"Dull, I should guess?" remarked Mr. Mitchell, in an apathetic way, and sauntering on, with his hands in his pockets.

"No; very quick and clever."

"Oh, I meant the old house; dull for a child, I should think. Bridget and Mary Jane shall call, if it be agreeable?"

"I think it would be a good thing for her to have companions. I dare say it is dull. Of course it must be so to her; but I didn't think of it," said Jacob, half-talking to himself.

"Ah, well, all the world is talking of it! Sly fellow—very sly! Fine pair of eyes, I'm told; indeed, I caught a flash. I see, I see;" with which mysterious and, to Jacob, very disagreeable speech they parted.

At breakfast, when Janet had left for her lessons, he suggested her joining the young Mitchells sometimes in their walks or play.

"Umph!" said Miss Russell. "Better not give the poor girl high notions."

"High notions from Bridget?" said Jacob, with a smile.

"Yes; high for her."

"Janet's father was a solicitor," Jacob quietly remarked.

"Was! was! Yes; probably he was; but what is he now? Depend on it, it will be for Jane's happiness hereafter to keep her down now. You and Anna are not far-seeing. You rush into a notion at once, and act from impulse. I call it downright cruelty to bring her up as a lady, knowing her circumstances."

"I wish we knew more about them," said Jacob. "She seems to have no relations. I wish I had asked more of her stepmother—but—"

"But you were too lazy," put in his sister.

Jacob did not answer this; but he contrived to leave his counting-house during the morning, and pay a visit to Mrs. Brown. She was the wife of Jacob's head man in the yards, and he was in the habit of employing her on many occasions as his almoner, when, from his retiring disposition, he preferred another to make inquiries and spend the money which he supplied. She was, in fact, a friend of his.

"Well, sir, and how's all up at the house? And Miss Janet, sir, how does she get on? Sure, I would like just to see her; and if it wasn't taking too much freedom with the ladies, I'd have called in, this very evening; for I've found a trinket of the young lady's maybe she'd value. But now you are here, sir, perhaps you'll take it? See! I found it behind the bed where the sick lad lay. Poor soul; no doubt it just dropped off her neck when she was a-nursing him. I noticed a ribbon round her throat when first she came."

"Possibly," said Jacob. "But, Mrs. Brown, I regret not having questioned Mrs. Nairn more about the child's family

and relations. We seem to know very little. Did you ever hear Mrs. Nairn speak on the subject?"

"No, sir, I never did. I heard Miss Janet say herself, she had no relative in the world but her 'Pa' and 'Tom,'—that's her brother that's dead. She would never own to her stepmother and the other children being related to her at all. But let 'em say what they will of her temper, I can only say, she's a handy girl as ever I seed for her size; and her kindness to him that's buried, none can tell of! Ay, sir! 'tis a hard thing for one so young to have her father in trouble and such a woman over her. Bless me, sir! I never comed across such a woman. What ever is to become of her, God only knows! Now, sir," she presently added, "here's the little thing I spoke of. I kept it in my pocket till I should go up to Queen's Terrace. 'Tis filled with black hair, like her own, and I suppose 'tis valuable."

"They are good pearls," said Jacob, taking the locket.

It opened with a spring. A long braid of jet-black hair was inclosed, and in enamel was written the word, "Maria."

"'Tis black hair, like her own, you see, sir; and I suppose it might be her own mother's hair. Anyway, I am glad 'tis not lost, nor gone the way of the other trinkets."

But Mr. Russell made no answer. He gazed at it like one in a dream, for it carried him back to other days; and then, suddenly rising, he wrapped it up, placed it in his waistcoat-pocket, and went away. Presently, when Mrs. Brown supposed he must be at Queen's Terrace, he looked in again, and said, "Good-day; thank you, Mrs. Brown," and again disappeared.

Meanwhile, Miss Russell's long-looked-for hour had come.

Anna was to be engaged the whole morning at a Penny

Club, and even desired her sister not to wait dinner for her, as, if pressed to do so, she should very probably dine with the Miss Roses.

Miss Russell had not a word to say against it—a rather unusual occurrence; and Janet slipped off to Betty in high glee, saying, she should have a holiday, for Miss Anna was going to be out all day. "And, oh! how nice it would be, if Mr. Jacob would but take me out for another walk. Do you think he will, Betty?"

"Dear me, no, Miss Janet! Master's always regglar in his ways. He walks before breakfast, and bides down at the quay all day—very busy. 'Tis a rare occasion to bring him here between meals. But—let me see, if the butcher's boy comes in soon, I'll send a message to master, and I shouldn't wonder if he did walk up; and perhaps—only *perhaps* mind, miss—he will coax missis for a treat for you, and sure 'twould do ye both good!"

But, alas! long before Betty's intended messenger appeared, all idea of a pleasant free walk was swept away.

"Jane! Jane! I want you! Come up here!" was heard by both Betty and Janet.

"Oh, Betty! what can she want?"

"Go, go, my dear; make haste! 'Tis only to hold a skein of wool, most likely."

"Now, Jane," said Miss Russell, adjusting her spectacles and drawing herself up, "it is quite time for you to begin to learn—to learn useful, practical things, that will help you by-and-by. I must speak seriously to Miss Anna about it. You know, Jane, that you are a beggar—don't look so fierce, child! God made beggars as well as kings, and we must be content with what He chooses. Whatever you might have

been once, I say, now, you are literally a beggar—dependent on us for food and clothing and lodging. You have virtually no father, and your stepmother is a—umph! we need not allude to her; she has thankfully accepted my proposal to take you in and bring you up. So you understand, I stand now instead of parents to you. If you are good, you will find me a kind mistress. I mean to teach you. Of course it will be a trial of patience. But now, let me see you sweep and dust this room, which I purposely desired Betty to leave undone."

Janet's eyes were almost distended as she exclaimed, while retreating a step: "Sweep the room! Is it to help Betty?"

"Yes; that is, no. It will be your work in future. I shall teach you a servant's duty. Now, tuck up the bed-valance; cover over the things on the table carefully. Don't stand staring at me in that strange, theatrical manner! Do you hear me, Jane?—take up the brush and begin."

"Do you expect me to sweep rooms and be a servant?"

"Of course I do! Why, what do you suppose, miss, is to become of you?—a convict's child! Come, no nonsense and fantastical pride! Do it at once."

Janet's face was crimson.

"Let me go home—go to her! I can't be worse off there! I won't sweep rooms for you! that is,—I would if any one wanted it, and asked me,—but not this way. I am not a servant. My papa is a gentleman. I am small—I am young—I am poor, perhaps," added she, with increasing vehemence and startling emphasis; "but I will be killed rather than be used so! What did you take me here for? You never said I was to be a servant?—I won't!"

Miss Russell was considerably taken aback at the child's

passionate, wild manner, her quivering features and her excited gestures; but she advanced in a stately way and administered two smart boxes on the ear, while she threatened to shut her into the cellar and feed her on bread and water.

The blows added to Janet's passion. She caught hold of Miss Russell's dress, so as to tear it. "You are a cruel woman! You are not a lady! I won't stay here—I won't!"

Betty here came to the door, alarmed at the noise. Janet flew to her and burst into a violent fit of crying.

"A little virago! a little spitfire!" exclaimed Miss Russell. "But we will tame her! Jane, listen to me. You will take that brush and sweep this room. Till it is done, I will allow you nothing but bread and water, and you will remain in that closet. Carry her there, Betty, till she comes to reason. I have said you shall do it, and do it you shall. But after such conduct I do not pretend to say that I will keep you here, far less teach you. Your pride must come down, for you *are* a beggar, and must learn to work for your bread."

Janet shook off Betty and stalked into the adjoining dressing-room or closet, with the air of a tragedy queen. There was no window, only a light from the upper part of Miss Russell's room door. Miss Russell commanded Betty not to bring her food, and then rendered it impossible by locking the door, telling Janet that when she was going to be good, she might ring the bell.

Anna did not return to dinner, and Miss Russell said nothing to Jacob about Janet's disobedience. He saved her the trouble of accounting for her absence, by making no remark; but seemed to be somewhat hurried and rather more abstracted than usual, and his sister was stiffer and more erect than ever.

The afternoon wore on and it grew dark, when a message came from Miss Rose, saying that Anna would remain the evening there. No bell had rung, much to Betty's horror, and often did she leave her work to steal up on tip-toe and listen at the closet-door, at the risk of her dismissal, as she knew, should Miss Russell find her there.

"Miss Janet, my dear! do speak, Miss!"

"You needn't call me Miss—I am not even allowed my name! I am Jane, the drudge—Jane, the beggar," was the answer at last.

"But do'ee, Miss Janet—you'll die of hunger and cold," again whispered Betty through the keyhole; and then a noise below made her start back like a guilty thing, and Janet was again alone.

When Mr. Russell returned for the evening, his sister bespoke his attention. She gave an account of the morning's proceedings, dwelling long on the fearful passion and glaring eye of the child, but leaving out her own preface to the command, so that Jacob in his ignorance thought the sweeping the room quite an every-day duty, which Janet must learn as much as sewing.

"Now, Jacob, she has been there all day, and has had nothing since breakfast—for she threw away the bread—she must be conquered. I would have used the rod, but that I should, perhaps, in these days of universal benevolence, have had a mob after me. Now, it is but fair for you to put your shoulder to the burden, since it was your wish, in the first place, to take her at all. I conclude, with all your fantastical notions, you will hardly uphold downright rebellion and disobedience."

"Certainly not; obedience is a great thing—the key-stone."

"Well, then, pray go up and threaten that girl. I suppose she may be afraid to resist a man. One way, would be to force her, by holding her hand on it, to take the broom, and this would save my word. I don't wish to starve her. Mind, Jacob, none of your gentle remonstrances and mild words will avail. You must use strength and authority. Good gracious!" added Miss Russell, as if overpowered by the recollection, "I never, never saw such determined rebellion—such insolent disobedience!"

Jacob was walking up and down the room, with his usual sad look deepened.

"Poor child! Sister, you say rightly, she must be led to obedience, now in her youth; but I would I were spared this."

"Always for sparing self! Indeed, I can do no more; I am fairly shaken. Anna and you throw it all on me, as usual."

There was a gradual tightening of Jacob's lips, and contraction of the brow, and, after a few more turns, he said—"Give me the key!"

It was quite dark upstairs, so he had to return for a candle. Janet was standing by a small table. She was very pale; but her colour flushed up as she saw who it was, while a look of mixed triumph and defiance made Jacob tighten his lips still more, though he sighed deeply.

"Janet, I am very sorry!"

Then there was a pause—broken, however, by her saying, sharply—

"Are you?"

"Oh, child! you are doing very wrongly. Why do you refuse to obey my sister?"

"I am not going to sweep rooms;—at least," she added, in

a softened voice, "not in that way. I would do it if I liked; if it was to oblige any one but—"

"And you will do it now, Janet," said he, taking her by the arm, and drawing her to him. "You must do it!"

She turned quickly to look up at him. His voice was changed. There was a light in his eye she had never seen before. She trembled visibly, and her eyes fell, her head drooped. "I would for you, or—or for Betty!—if I was asked properly. But—but your sister is a naughty, bad woman, and I won't do it for her! No—I say I won't!"

"Janet!" he repeated, and pressing her arm more tightly than he was aware of—"do you hear? Do you understand? You must be obedient! Go—go at once!"

She looked up again at him surprised, and then, after a pause, with drooping head, and tears starting to her eyes—which, however, she brushed away—she went into the next room, and languidly looked about for the brush. He followed, and placing the candle on a table, watched her.

She now hurried her movements, rushing about, and raising a dust that would have horrified Miss Russell. She jerked the brush, and knocked it about, and her face looked so hard!

He sat down, and averted his head.

The child soon stopped her work; but he did not turn or move. She stood at a distance, gazing at him through her long hair.

Soon he felt a light touch on his shoulder, and she whispered huskily: "Are you vexed?—are you vexed with me?" she repeated; and then she slid down on her knees, and laid her head on his lap, crying softly, "I'll be good!—I'll be good!" She was faint and worn.

"I am glad and thankful, Janet, that you have overcome yourself at last," he said, laying his hand on her head. "Now, I hope you will try to express sorrow to my sister, for" . . . .

But she interrupted him, "No—oh, no! I can't—I can't!"

"Not now, perhaps; you are faint and pale, child! Well, go to Betty. To-morrow, I will see you; don't cry and sob any more. Poor child! I am not angry now."

He raised her and kissed her forehead, and smoothed back her hair; and then lifting her in his arms, carried her to Betty, who was at hand in Janet's bedroom.

"Give her some food, Betty, and put her to bed. Good-night, my dear child!"

Janet sobbed herself to sleep, holding Betty's hand; and Miss Russell settled with her brother that there was no necessity for telling Anna what had happened. They each had reasons for this concealment. Miss Russell hardly believed in Jacob's assertion, that Janet had actually used the broom; though he did not go so far as to say, with any good effect. She also professed unbelief that to-morrow would find her willing to acknowledge her fault. "It was all from the fasting—that had tamed her spirit for the moment," she said. "To-morrow would find her as high as ever."

Jacob did not go at his usual hour for a walk the following morning. To Betty's surprise, he lingered about between the stairs and the parlour.

"Where is the child?" at last he asked.

"Oh, she was fairly worn down, sir, and I left her sleeping; but she's up now, I hear."

"Send her to me, Betty; I want to speak a few words."

Janet entered, in a shrinking, timid manner, hardly daring to look in his face.

"Good morning, my dear. Janet, it seems very sad to me, when I miss your welcome in the hall. I always look for it now."

"Do you?" she said, venturing a longer glance at him. "It is what I did to papa. I always waited for him in the hall at home—always."

"Well, then, this evening (I shall not be at home for dinner); but this evening let me find you there; and, Janet, I shall know by that if you have done rightly, and made friends with my sister."

A flashing and bridling-up alarmed him. He drew her near him. "Janet!" he said, in an earnest, tender voice, "I have something of yours that you will be glad to have again!" He held up the locket.

Oh, the sudden beam of joy—the clapping of her small hands! "I thought it was lost—I thought it was lost! Papa gave it to me; he clasped it on my neck, with a golden chain; but that is gone—but the dear locket! I am so glad!"

"Tell me, child, whose hair is this? What name is this?"

"Maria—my mamma's name, and her hair—my own mamma!"

Then there was a pause, during which she rubbed her recovered treasure with her hand, and examined it with sparkling eyes.

"Janet, do you remember your mother?"

He spoke in a low and rather sad tone; and she looked inquiringly at him.

"No; she died when Tom was born. I was only a year and a half old, papa says. But I have seen her picture; he took it with him. She was very pretty."

"What was her name—her maiden name?"

Janet did not know. She had quite forgotten, if she ever heard it.

"Papa loved her very much, and she sang beautifully."

That was all she knew.

"No one ever spoke of her; only once, when papa was crying very much by my bedside, quite in the middle of the night, he told me my mamma was called Marìa—the Spanish name; and he showed me the picture, and he hoped I shouldn't be like her quite in everything, though I was in some ways, he said. I suppose he meant, not to die as she did."

Jacob said nothing. He was, apparently, looking far, far away, through the window.

"What are you thinking so about?" Janet presently asked, timidly.

He started, and said he should lose his walk.

"Remember, then, Janet, I must have a welcome. Oh, child! if you could but know how blessed it would be to conquer yourself early!"

He laid his hand on her head, with a low "God bless you!" and then went away!

And over that wild, impulsive nature was, from that time, established a power and authority, to which, rebellious as she was, she bowed at once. Janet feared him. That look in his eye, which she had seen but once, that strange change in his voice, was never forgotten. But it was no unwholesome fear. She longed to please him, and to win one of his

quiet, approving smiles: and, with these feelings strong in her mind, she met Miss Russell with quiet and repentant looks, learnt her lessons very perfectly for Anna, and even submitted to the soft caresses which Mr. Lewis was fond of showering on her—calling her his "little pet," and twisting her hair on his ringed fingers, and treating her very much as a baby, though, no doubt, with kind and benevolent intent. Janet hated it, and had once shocked Betty by calling it "humbugging ways." But to-day she looked meekly on the floor, and stood still, only wondering if "Mr. Jacob could form an idea of all she had to undergo."

The shutters were closed, and the hall-lamp lighted. Miss Russell was busy over her paper basket, and Anna was devising new patterns for pincushions, when Janet stole up from the kitchen, and hid herself behind a large cloak.

It seemed to her a long time,—she began to think that he would never come; but there was a heavy tramp, and Janet withdrew into her hiding-place, from whence, however, she could look out and observe.

A quick, anxious, expectant glance all round, and then he hung up his hat, with a troubled and disappointed sigh; when out sprang Janet, like a monkey, and clung to his arm, looking up, with a shy, bright smile.

"Ah, little maiden! you were playing me a trick. Glad to see thee"—placing his hand on her head. "No; don't go away to-night; let us keep a little holiday together. Come with me!" and he gently pulled her towards the parlour.

She stood by his chair, while he played with the kitten, and they were all three as cheerful and idle as possible for about a quarter of an hour. Then Miss Russell remarked

that, in her youth, it was considered right for children to be employed, and she quoted the line—

> "For Satan still some mischief finds
> For idle hands to do."

"Come, Jane, if you have nothing else to do, tear some paper."

Janet looked hard at the cat; but Jacob drew round his chair, and said:—

"Janet, I am idly disposed this evening. Suppose you teach me how to tear paper. Sister, lend us that empty basket, and we will fill it."

"Bless me, Jacob! what next?" exclaimed Anna.

"I am never surprised at anything Jacob does," said Miss Russell, in a resigned tone. "He is certainly a very peculiar person."

Janet knelt before the basket, tearing very fast, only smiling at Mr. Russell's careful, elaborate way of proceeding; while the kitten chose to fancy the scraps and basket were provided for her particular amusement, and jumped in and out, and pulled about the paper; so that, at last, Janet's smiles broke into laughter; and such a gay, cordial sound had not been heard for many a year in the old room.

Genuine laughter is infectious, and Anna joined, though she protested it to be "very absurd." Even Miss Russell had hard work to keep her lips steady, as the playful kitten frisked about and the child laughed.

As for Jacob, he sat in heartfelt enjoyment. He had forgotten what a real hearty laugh was; Mr. Mitchell's slow, deliberate "ha-has," and Mr. Lewis's bottled-up "hee-hees," being anything but exhilarating to him; and they were the only laughers of his acquaintance.

CHAPTER IX.

TEACHING THE YOUNG IDEA HOW TO SHOOT.

DECEMBER came, crisp and clear, "regular Christmas weather," and the coach was full, both inside and out, for several days, while the van had more packages and hampers than the man knew how to manage. Christmas time, the season of family gatherings; when every household attempts its best to be social and happy; the very force of habit doing much towards keeping up the tradition and the form, even where vacant places look sad, and make it a hard exertion for aching hearts to "keep up!"

In Wareham, among the old inhabitants, there was some speculation as to the Tall House and its owners. It was so strange to see a child marshalled into the chapel pew by the Miss Russells, or to observe them on those rare occasions when Anna took Janet for a walk, and Mr. Russell overtook them.

Betty indulged in a few perplexed reveries, wondering much how it would all "turn out," and vexing at the numerous punishments, the severe tasks, and the little, or no play which seemed to be souring the child's temper and shutting up her heart. Adoring her master, Betty had not failed to note his pleasure in the child, and she resented his consequent disappointment, as each attempt of his towards easy

intercourse was thwarted; and at the many times he was greeted with complaints of Janet's bad heart and rebellious temper, and sometimes blamed for all the annoyance brought to the house by this new inmate; "for he had been the one to force the child on them."

Mr. Russell said nothing, but he felt it to be another disappointment—another hope set.

He had fanciful and ideal theories, perhaps, about children and their good influence. As he said once, he often looked wistfully at the little creatures on the quay. He really thought he had brought home a little sunshine—a jewel which would in some way bring life and gladness to the old sombre house. But now it seemed as if she was to be the subject of discord instead! He resolved to abstain from gratifying himself, hoping it would be better for the child if he did not interfere. This made him withdraw, though it caused him regret, and Betty could not understand it.

For Janet it was a trying time. Every day she was in disgrace, wearing bands round her head, or arm (a new device of Anna's), on which was written in large letters the name of the particular fault she had committed—such as "Idleness," "Pride," "Obstinacy," &c. She was scarcely ever a whole day without one of these decorations. Besides this she was often condemned to the solitary study, or the deserted, covered-up drawing-room, with a sum "all wrong," which she must bring right, or a lesson to learn, before she left the room or had any food. After these fasts the child was apt to fall asleep by the kitchen fire, and look weary and flushed, and so hard and defiant, that it made Betty's heart ache.

Janet grew more and more reserved to every one save to

Betty. To her indulgent ears was now and then confided in dim twilight, or when Betty came to bed and found her still awake, Janet's earnest and never-forgotten wish for "Mr. Jacob to love her." None guessed how, amid all the outward indifference and wilfulness, she tried to restrain her naughty fits, or how bitterly she felt each disapproving look and word of his. Too proud to complain, she winced and fretted at his greater silence and estrangement; and in her manner to him now, there was a reckless, hard indifference, which pained him. He attributed it partly to his sisters' habit of calling on him to "manage" her in any of the battles when she had proved too much for them. His command was never unheeded. A word or a look was always enough. But she sought him less and less, and at last he begged his sisters not to make a bugbear of him. They answered that it was only selfish of him to mind it, and perhaps Miss Russell seized the opportunity for one of her lectures on his love of self-pleasing, and dislike to give himself or others pain, even when it was needful for discipline. But the argument which weighed most with him was one sometimes urged with volubility by Anna, about the great selfishness of his seeking to gain the child's exclusive or best affection, and leaving his sisters all the trouble and odium. "It was very fine for him to come in and play with and indulge Janet; it cost him nothing, while all the trouble of enforcing good habits and correcting faults fell on herself or sister." Anna added, that for herself she did not care, teaching was her vocation, but "sister always was prone to be a little jealous, and she had been severely disappointed in her views respecting Janet, so that it was hard to have all the trouble and none of the reward."

"But, my dear Anna, do I prevent the child from loving either of you? Do I not always urge your claims, and speak of your goodness to her? But you constantly bring me in to enforce obedience, and I am not aware that I shrink from it, however painful, when needful."

Yet Anna's words sank deeply, all the more so, when he saw symptoms of annoyance in his eldest sister. He well knew her strong and jealous temper, and the aim and object of his life latterly had been to save her all the pain he could, and to give her pleasure.

For some time he had found the last impossible, and the first very difficult. He believed it to be his fault, and to please her he was ready to give up his pleasant chats with Janet. He came less to the house, which lately had been more attractive to him, and again the old, dull, and cold atmosphere prevailed at No. 1.

The thing which Janet most disliked was her weekly teaching from Mr. Lewis. From no one did she receive so many caresses, or so many endearing epithets as from him; but she shrank from him with decided dislike. The first time he began his office, Janet, having been duly warned to behave well, looked demurely on the carpet, though a world of mischief lurked under her long eyelashes. Mr. Lewis explained to her why he undertook to teach her, and what his plans were, somewhat lengthily; then, patting her head, in a quick, fluttering way, he said—

"Now, dear! I will commence asking a few questions, by way of ascertaining your knowledge. Attend, darling! What are you?" pronouncing these last words with great emphasis.

"A girl."

"St-st—, a foolish answer, little pet. Now be very serious, and tell me—What are you?"

Janet was now counting his teeth, thinking she had never seen so many or such sharp ones before, and wondering why he showed them so.

A third time the question was repeated—

"I don't know."

"My good child! is it possible?—is it *possible* that you haven't been taught that you are a sinner?"

"No, sir, unless a beggar means a sinner!" said she, looking down to hide the pleasure she felt at this mischievous retort.

"What does the child mean?" exclaimed poor Mr. Lewis, completely puzzled. "Well, I see I must commence at the A B C, and leave you a list of questions and answers which you must learn. Now, that will do for the present, dear—learn in time, won't she? Good morning; bye bye!"

"Good morning," said Janet, jumping out of the room, and rushing down to Betty.

"Oh, Betty! I've puzzled the minister, and will do so again next time. I'll tire him out, and then he won't come."

"Oh, Miss Janet! I wonder you ain't afeared to do so by a clergyman."

"Who would be 'afeared,' as you call it, of him—*of him!* Why, if he had all the cat-o'-nine-tails the Captain talked of, he would never make me afraid of *him*—never! I tell you what, though, Betty," lowering her voice, "I am afraid of Mr. Jacob."

"Bless you, Miss Janet! what nonsense! No one living need to be afraid of him; such a good, kind, quiet man!"

"Ah, Betty, you never saw his look,—just like a lion, or

heard his voice, like—oh, just like thunder far away ; do you know ?"

"Bless me, Miss !" said Betty, angrily ; "what will ye say next ? Master never looked no other than a Christian in his life, I'm sure ; and as to his voice—thunder, indeed ! —why, I've aheard tell as how he was a fine singer one day. 'Tis ungrateful in ye, Miss ; ye ought to love him, that ye ought."

"Well, I didn't say I didn't ; but for all that I am dreadfully afraid of him. He looks quite awful sometimes."

"Well, you are a queer one !" Betty ended with, "And not easy to read off, somehow."

Mr. Russell was away a fortnight on business, and when he returned, he found Janet very ill—in high fever. In her delirium she called piteously on her father, or sometimes she deprecated Mr. Russell's stern look to Betty, then ran off towards Manchester scenes and names.

Miss Russell, who was experienced and kind in illness, attended to her untiringly. Anna, who was too fussy and buzzing, and, indeed, who possessed no one qualification for a nurse, and had no understanding or experience of illness,—she, too, was kind, and laid by her favourite pursuits to carry up broth or run a message.

And Jacob rejoiced at this proof of their goodness. Tears gathered in his eye as he watched Miss Russell, in her still, grave way, ministering so kindly to the poor fever-stricken child. How fully he forgave all her little sharp speeches ; how he blamed himself for even remembering them, and how he wished the child could but be conscious whose hand it was that bathed her brow, or arranged her pillows ! But all that time Janet knew nothing—not even that her

cherished, long silken hair was cut off; nor that one night they were all there,—Miss Russell, composed and collected, obeying doctor's orders; Anna writing for Mr. Lewis to come, Betty kneeling at the bed-foot with streaming eyes, looking from the sick child to her master, who stood in such subdued, calm sorrow, that she felt he prayed—Janet never knew all this.

She was restored to consciousness and life, only to feel and see everything through a distorted medium; to be querulous and weak; to need gentle care and forbearance, and to find, now that danger was over, all things as they had been; Miss Russell severe, and Anna unsympathising. Her recovery was slow and painful.

Dr. Dean said that she had been over-excited, and prescribed entire rest, fresh air, and strengthening diet for the future.

When she was able to come downstairs, Mrs. Mitchell sent her daughters to amuse her. Bridget, the elder, was a plain, awkward, prosing girl, pronounced by people at large to be not "over wise," but considered in her own family to possess an unusual share of that uncommon gift "common sense."

"A good humdrum household girl," her mother said; while Mary Jane was deemed somewhat of a beauty, and was said to have the "Russell features exactly." They were both older than Janet.

The first visit tired Janet too much for her to care for a second. They were left together with an historical game Anna had provided, "since," as she said, "Janet could not bear lessons, knowledge must be gently 'insinuated into her play.'"

For a short time the game was played in due form ; there was a grave spinning of teetotums and shifting little men from city to city, but at last, the first shyness wearing off a little, Bridget said, "Suppose we leave it alone ; only don't tell, you know, Mary Jane."

"Is Miss Russell very strict?"

"Yes," said Janet.

"Oh, then, I suppose cousin Anna is your favourite. She is very pretty, isn't she? She teaches you, doesn't she? Does she set long tasks?" said Bridget, talking fast, by way of making up for lost time.

"Which is your favourite, though?" put in Mary Jane.

"Betty," said Janet.

They both laughed, and then began questioning again, as to where she was born—how many brothers and sisters she had?—did her father keep a carriage? &c. ; at all which Janet stared, and, leaning back, said, pettishly, "You make my headache with your questions."

"You are very rude to say so," said Mary Jane. "We heard you were ill-tempered. Who do you think said so?"

"I don't care," said Janet.

"'I don't care' was hanged," remarked Bridget, with great gravity. "If you are ever so pretty, and are cross, no one will like you."

"I don't wish any one to like me."

"Oh! oh!" exclaimed both sisters, looking at one another and then at Janet, as if she were some wild beast.

"There's cousin Jacob coming in!" said Bridget, presently as she looked out of window. "No," she added, in a disappointed tone, "he is not coming in. Where can he be going Does he know the Browns, at the end of the Terrace?"

Mary Jane here whispered something to Janet, who only replied by a scornful toss of her head.

"Oh, Mary Jane! how wrong of you!" exclaimed Bridget, looking round. "I know what you are saying. It is not true."

"Indeed, I should think not!" said Janet, with inexpressible scorn in her manner and voice.

"And so the party is to be next week," remarked Bridget.

"Will they allow you to come down, I wonder?" asked Mary Jane.

"I don't know. Perhaps I shall not be strong enough."

"Oh, I didn't mean on that account exactly!" said Mary Jane. "It is always a grand party, and they take out the best silver. The Russells are of good family, you know. I hope they'll let you come down; I'm sure no one would mind."

"We will beg for you," said Bridget; and very soon they took leave.

Poor Janet was very tired. Betty put her to bed; but she was restless and excited, and tossed about till Betty's work was done and she came up for the night.

"Oh, Betty, I am sure I am ill!"

"I am sure you are, my dear."

"Shall I die—do you think so, Betty?"

"No; Dr. Dean says, with care, you'll get stronger and better."

"Betty!"—after a pause—"where is Tom, my brother, gone?"

"To heaven, I hope, my dear. But do try and go to sleep."

"You say that to prevent my talking; but I can't sleep. Tell me, Betty, where is heaven?"

"Well, then, bless you, my dear, I don't know. But, for sure and certain, 'tis where God is—where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest, as the hymn says—and where everybody is good and kind, just like master."

"Do you think I shall ever go there?"

"I hope so—I pray so, Miss Janet."

"I am not good. Mr. Lewis says I am a sinner; Miss Russell says I am a beggar, and she—I mean my step-mother—used to say I had a fearful temper. How can I get there?"

"Well, then, Miss Janet, if you had to pass a rough dark place, full of pits and snares like, and you were told if you put out your hand, some one would guide you safe through, wouldn't you put out your hand, my dear?"

"Yes. What then?"

"Well, then, I always think the Saviour stands like that, ready to guide us right to heaven through this dangerous world. We must aye walk in His footprints, and hearken to His voice, and trust to Him. He is always nigh, Miss Janet."

"Betty, you are very good! I love you, and I loved—oh, how I loved!—papa and Tom; but no one will ever love me again like that. I was his darling. It was cruel to take him away. There is no one to love me now, and I love no one but you."

"Don't'ee say so, my dear. Sure, and we all love you, and you love the ladies and master."

"Betty!"—and she raised her head, and laid her hand on Betty's hand—"you can't make the waves come or go; no more can any one make me love them. I shall never love the ladies, and I—I *hate* Mr. Lewis! Mr. Jacob I love. Oh,

he was so different from the others, when they all came to see us in those horrid lodgings! They asked so many questions; he said very little, but he stroked my head, and looked so kind! I love him and you; but the ladies,—no! never, never!"

"Keep quiet, my dear lamb! Bless me! they eyes of yours flame up like fire, and frighten me—and you're hot. Lie still, and I'll read a bit."

So Betty opened her Bible, and read slowly, for she was not a great scholar; and the quiet, monotonous sound soothed the restless Janet, and at last she slept.

CHAPTER X.

THE TEA-PARTY.

Miss Anna Russell was busy one morning writing tiny notes on tinted paper, when Jacob came in.

"I met Miss Rose just now, and she bid me say that she and her sister would be happy to come, and she supposed she need not write," he said.

"She should not suppose any such thing. It is a free-and-easy way which I don't approve of," said Miss Russell.

"She writes such an unseemly hand, we can excuse her," remarked Anna.

"Her voice is the pleasantest of any woman's in Wareham, I think," said Jacob. "And, by the way, she showed me a picture of her godson, one of the very sweetest things you ever saw. She says she will bring it when she comes."

"Pray when did you go to Cliff House, then, Jacob?"

"Yesterday, on business."

"Ah! if ever there was a mysterious, peculiar man in the world, you are one, Jacob!" sighed Miss Russell. "And then, what can make you take such a fancy to the Miss Roses, eh? Why"—adjusting her spectacles—"I see nothing so very particular in them. Really, it has an odd

appearance, your singling out that house for visits—you, who never darken any other door in Wareham!"

Jacob laughed quietly, for this speech, a little varied, had been repeated so often to him. "Don't be alarmed, sister, if I do go twice or thrice a year to see Miss Rose, an old friend, tempted by her pretty things—to say nothing of her own pleasant voice—so pleasant, so cordial, that I wonder I don't oftener go to hear it."

"Pshaw, Jacob! What a piece of work about a voice! Really, it is hardly proper to hear you talk so much about a woman's voice! It is so fantastical! I am sure I don't see any difference in voices."

"Jacob!" said Anna, "our party is to take place next Tuesday. Don't forget it."

"Very well. Who is coming?"

"Every one as usual—five Mitchells, of course; Mr. Lewis, the Deans, the Roses, and the Grants; and that is all, I believe: so many have declined, pleading prior engagements."

"So much the better," said Miss Russell. "We have done our duty, and our room will be less crowded."

"I suppose Janet will appear?" asked Anna.

"Indeed, I think not. Why should she?"

"Oh, sister! why?—why she is our protégée, and really she *is* pretty! She must be, for so many persons ask me who she is. And after all, sister, I beg your pardon; but your notion of keeping her down and making a servant of her will never do. Though Mrs. Mitchell, in her blunt, sharp way said, 'Of course you won't introduce her.'"

"What can it be to Mrs. Mitchell?" interrupted Miss Russell. "She is really too interfering! If we choose to

introduce her we can. It is all jealousy on their parts. She shall appear, were it only to show them that we are the best judges. I can't stand the Mitchells' interference."

"Then I will make her a cap, and plait her a tucker," said Anna.

"A cap!" exclaimed Jacob from behind his book. "Why a cap?"

"Why, don't you know? Is it possible you have not observed that her hair is all cut off—all but a tiny piece in front, Jacob?"

He confessed he had not observed it; but now remarked that it was a pity. Her hair was one of her distinctive marks—it had struck him when first he saw her.

Miss Russell thought that she looked far nicer and tidier now that it was all cut off, and here the conversation stopped.

There was a grand preparation for this party—an annual affair—a Russell custom; for a Christmas party had been given in that house ever since the present occupants were children. The old family silver was taken out and polished up. Miss Russell superintended the beating of eggs and baking of cakes, and the dusting the dainty, fine, clear old china, of which Betty was as proud as any one."

"Ain't it grand, Miss Janet?" she said, holding up a cup.

"I see nothing particular," answered the dark-eyed little lady, with a provoking toss of her head. "We had silver like that every day, and quite as pretty china, and lots of parties, and oh, such beautiful plants!"

"Bless us! I forgot all that. Poor child! but we all have our ups and downs, my dear, in this life! Talking of flowers, Miss Janet, I have desired John Pratt, who is coming to wait, you know, to get me a bunch for you; and

here it is. The Mitchells will be sure and have gay nosegays, and you sha'n't be without one, though it mayn't be all so grand as theirs."

Janet smiled graciously and brightly at the sight of the flowers.—Dark myrtle with red rose-buds. She arranged them with skilful fingers, and said it would look well on black; but she frowned and sighed as she added, "I never before wore such a shabby frock to a party."

Very soon after this, Janet was summoned to Anna's room to be dressed. Anna had benevolently spent two hours in making a cap, with wonderful fanciful bows of white satin, and in plaiting a huge tucker of blond. Janet bit her lips and said she did not like it; but Anna told her that little girls knew nothing of what was right, and pinned and placed, and fussed and chattered over her, till Janet was quite tired, and felt very indifferent about going into the drawing-room at all. At last the shoulder-knots were tied—having long streamers—a particular fancy of Anna's, by the way; and a finishing stroke being put to her hair, with a remark, "what a pity it was it did not curl naturally;" and then she was dismissed, to "sit perfectly still till the company came."

The odd, half fanciful, half prim cap—the high ruff of blond and the black bows, on the common black frock—had, to say the least, a singular appearance. She crept into the room, pale and tired.

"Bless me!" said Miss Russell, who was lighting the candles, "what a scarecrow Anna has made of you! I said, 'let her alone, a plain dress is best.' But she has been at her vagaries. Come here, child.—*This* I positively will not allow! Let me pull your frock on your shoulders." So she tied the strings tighter, which had the effect of bringing

the shoulder-knots very high, and sadly destroying the evenness of the plaited blond tucker.

"And this fly-away thing, too! Pooh! Anna ought to know better." And Miss Russell ruthlessly seized the cap, and crimped up the lace border between her thumb and finger, pinching it very hard, as if angry with it.

The pale, thin, dark-eyed child, wasted with her late illness, sat down, looking very quiet and demure while her long eye-lashes rested on her cheeks; but when she raised them, what a gleam of dark light flickered up!—too much for a child. Her features might be good; but the expression suited not the face, so thin, so small, and so very, very pale. John Pratt, the waiter, even remarked it, and said to Betty, "it was unnatural like; he didn't see no beauty in her, not he!"

Miss Russell resumed her lighting and placing. Janet sat like a statue, and presently Jacob came in. He was dressed in his best, though with his accustomed Quaker-like plainness. He went to the fire, and, standing with his back to it, looked round the room. He seemed to be half amused and much pleased; his lips curled as if with some merry but suppressed conceit. At last his glance rested on the one dark corner and on Janet.

"Ah! little maiden, how primly you are sitting up!"

She immediately arose, sprang towards him, and then stopped short.

"Come, my dear; come to me." And he took her hand. "How cold you are, my dear; pray warm yourself before our guests come." And he began to rub her small cold hands.

"What have we here?" he presently exclaimed. "Dear me, some of Anna's bows! And is this a cap?"

He laughed a little, and then said, "Well, Janet, I always prefer people in work-a-day clothes. I like you in your plain frock and white pinafore."

"And so do I," she said, vehemently.

He looked at her, and saw the angry glance she gave over her shoulders at her bows.

"It is the fashion, I daresay," he remarked, by way of reconciling her to it. "But where did you get those beautiful flowers? Betty! Ah! Betty's a good thoughtful soul as ever breathed. They are very pretty, Janet."

And as the fire threw its warm glow on her, and he continued to admire and speak of the flowers and the party in his quiet half-joking way, the fierce harsh look vanished, and she smiled, and chatted of flowers she had grown and tended, and parties she had been at long ago in Manchester.

She was still playing with his watch-seals, and smiling at his pretended dread of the "rap, rap," he expected every moment, when Anna tripped in, and holding open the door announced "Miss Rose." That lady, it seemed, had been in Anna's room some little time, and now she greeted Mr. and Miss Russell pleasantly, and then unfolded a parcel she had brought.

"You see, I have not forgotten you, Mr. Russell. There," she said, touching Janet's shoulder, who pressed close up to Jacob to see the picture, "that is my godson, and that is his little sister. She must be just your age, little girl. This picture was taken some time ago. Isn't he a handsome fellow? And he is as good as he is handsome, so dutiful to his mother, so affectionate to his sister, and very clever. He will be very well off some of these days," she added, turning to Miss Russell. "Mr. Russell, it delights me to see

you are as much charmed as I am with it," she said, presently.

"It is indeed beautiful," said Jacob, still bending over it; "beautiful in every way. The grouping is perfect—that bright golden head buried in the great massive dog, and that fine noble boy standing so erect! I hardly ever saw a sweeter face than his."

"Pictures are always flattering," remarked Miss Russell.

"I should like to show the real living George to you," said Miss Rose, laughing. "I am very proud of him!"

Dr. and Mrs. Dean were now announced, and just as they had taken places in the circle there was another arrival. Mr. Russell had, of course, to say something to each guest; he did it with true hospitality; but when there was a general buzz established he once more bent over the picture.

"Do you like pretty faces?" whispered Janet, who still kept close at his side.

"Yes, anything pretty. Look at that lovely hair, Janet; how the sunlight catches it! Don't you wish that little girl were here to play with you?"

"I don't like yellow hair!" Janet said, disdainfully.

"Are the grapes sour, little maiden?" he asked with a smile. She pouted a little; but he laid his hand on her head as he put down the picture, rising hastily to receive Mrs. Mitchell. Janet drew it towards her, and looked at it again.

"I like the boy's hair best," she said to herself. "It is like papa's, brown and curly."

Miss Russell never appeared to such advantage as at these home parties. In her handsome poplin-dress and spotless white gloves she looked quite the gentlewoman. It gave her

pleasure to keep up an old custom in assembling their friends at Christmas time. There was much dignity in her manner of receiving them, and though occasionally there was a dryness in her tone of voice, or she was tempted to give a sharp reply, yet, on the whole, she was very unlike her daily self. Probably it was this that gave Mr. Russell's voice an unusual and rare touch of mirth, and brought that pleased smile so often.

"Why, Jacob," exclaimed Mrs. Mitchell, in her short brusque manner, "I declare you grow younger every year! —Mr. Mitchell? O, I can't be responsible for his short-comings; I can't think what detains him!"

"Long coming, you mean; and here he is!"

"Ha, ha! Long enough, as you say, Cousin Jacob. Just look at him. Why, even you, who are certainly a tall man, look nothing beside him!" And she tapped Jacob's shoulder with her fan, and looked with a joyous admiring gaze on her long-legged thread-paper husband, who came in accompanied by his son Edward.

"Allow me to present you with my first camellias, Cousin Anna," he said, holding out a choice bouquet.

Anna simpered and thanked him. She and Mr. Mitchell always flirted a little.

"There, now," exclaimed his wife in her boisterous way; "that's what he has been about; he surely ought to have been a gardener; and you see, Anna, he has kept them so close that neither his girls nor his wife have seen the flowers. However, I am sure I am glad you have them. And you, poor little sickly soul, you seem to like flowers," she added, turning to Janet, who was looking admiringly on the beautiful camellias. "Bless me," lowering her voice to a whisper,

"Jacob, she is nothing but a scarecrow, a walking skeleton! Does Anna drill her too much, hey?"

This speech caused a shadow to pass over Jacob's face; he looked at Janet, and felt for the first time how altered she was. In the course of the evening other remarks to the same effect were made.

After a long attentive gaze at the child, Mrs. Grant said,—"I am disappointed, Mr. Russell, as to her beauty; she is so extremely odd-looking, and I don't quite think the expression a pleasant one. Ah! I see she can smile."

"She is looking badly just now," answered Jacob. "And I, too, see the defects you mention; but it is a changeful countenance, and there is a something in the eyes which—"

"Which is decidedly Spanish, Russell, hey?" interrupted Mr. Grant, smiling at his friend. "There lies the charm, I guess?"

A very slight flush passed over Jacob's brow, and his lips were a little moved from their usual calm sweetness. Then he said, "I believe there is Spanish blood in her, Grant; but," turning again to Mrs. Grant, "in spite of your forebodings, and my own doubts, and the occasional anxiety, I assure you it adds an interest to the house. She can be very merry sometimes, and I do believe that my sisters are fond of her."

Meanwhile, the subject of all these remarks was seated between the two Mitchells, looking over a book of prints and some of Anna's knick-knacks.

Mr. Lewis, with an extra stiff white tie, and an extra allowance of Rowland's macassar, leaned over Janet's chair, and talked to Mary Jane.

"How beautifully this bag is worked! I am so fond of working. It is quite a feminine taste; all ladies ought to like it," said Mr. Lewis.

"Do you like work?" said Bridget to Janet.

"I hate the very sight of it!" was the answer.

"Oh, don't hate anything," said Bridget. "'Tisn't right to hate, is it?"

"Who talks of hating?" said Jacob, as he drew near this party. "Not Mary Jane, I hope?"

Mary Jane coloured, and said, "You are always joking. I never said I hated anything in my life, except music."

"Hate music!" exclaimed Janet. "What a strange person you must be! I hate many things, and many—but I *love* music," and the pale face was glowing as she spoke.

"Do you play at all?" asked Jacob.

"A little. I was learning—" And she suddenly stopped.

Mr. Lewis asked Bridget what piece she was learning; he understood that she was very fond of it.

"Yes, indeed," Mary Jane said. "She practises two or three hours every day."

"Do you ever play any of Haydn's music?" asked Jacob.

"Oh!" cried Janet, "that's what I— that's what—" and she stopped again, blushing crimson.

"Janet!" called Anna, from the other side of the table, "you are getting quite excited; you ought to go to bed. Speak to her, Jacob!—indeed, she must not sit up late."

"Do as she is bid," said Mr. Lewis, patting her head, or rather cap, until she stooped out of his reach.

"Are you tired, Janet?" asked Jacob.

Before she could answer, Anna came near with a shawl,

talking very fast about her taking cold in the passage, and what exceeding care was necessary for so delicate a plant.

Janet looked annoyed, and deigned not to return the Mitchells' "good-nights," or Mr. Lewis's offered hand.

She groped her way up the dark stairs—dark from the contrast to the well-lighted room; and, without calling Betty, or asking for a candle, she sat on the steps, leaning her head on her hands.

The buzz of voices from the parlour reached her, and then the clinking of glasses and dishes, and she knew that supper was going on.

Tired as she really was, and cold, and hungry, it pleased her to sit there till she was half asleep, too heavy to be roused by the sound of steps.

"Eh! Janet! Little maiden! How's this?"—presently she heard, and looking up sleepily, and with a shiver, for she was very cold, she saw Mr. Russell bending over her. Then he raised her quite up into his arms.

"Why are you not in your bed, child?"

"I don't know; I wasn't sleepy. I—"

"You were half, if not quite asleep, when I came up, and you are frozen, poor child! Did no one take care of you? Betty is so busy, I suppose. But come, I'll take you to a fire."

So saying, he carried her down stairs to the kitchen. Betty was there busy about something.

"Here's a stray lamb; give her a seat, Betty," he said.

"Eh? Miss Janet! I thought you was a-bed and asleep. What's all this about?"

As Mr. Russell was about to withdraw his arm from her,

having placed her in a chair, Janet clung to him tightly ; so he remained still, chafing her cold hand.

"Sit down," she said, shyly, but in a coaxing tone. He took a chair and then drew her on his knee; but neither spoke. He was gazing at the fire, and she glanced from the blaze to his face. At last she said, timidly—

"Why do you like yellow hair best?"

"Yellow hair,—best? What do you mean, child? Have you been dreaming on the stairs?"

"You said how beautiful that little girl's hair was;—in the picture, I mean."

"Oh!— Well, and isn't it beautiful, and bright as gold, with the light flaming on it? Don't you like it?"

"No! not at all. I like the boy's best."

"Good!" Mr. Russell answered, in an amused tone. "So you see both get admired. It is well people don't always admire the same thing, isn't it?"

"I don't know; I don't care— But," she added, after waiting, "I wish you didn't like light hair best!"—

"Indeed! and why? Not that I do in general, I believe. Most persons I have admired have had dark hair—dark and dusk as yours, Janet!" and he gave a little sigh.

"Whose?"

"Whose, do you ask? Several—yet one in particular. A lady I knew very long ago, Janet. She was called 'Maria.'" His voice took a tone which caused Janet to look at him. But a dark light seemed to burn up in her eyes, and she breathed quickly. After a long gaze at him, she said in a whisper,—

"Where does she live?"

Something in her way of speaking caused him to turn and look at her, and then he stroked her hands.

"No, dear, she is dead and buried. It was very long ago, Janet, when I was quite young. Can you fancy me young? In those days I knew more people, and I was merrier, more fit to be a companion than now."

Janet drew a long breath, and looked pleased. "I should like to be old, and not young," she said.

"Natural enough, I suppose. And I—"

"Do you wish to be young?" she asked, finding he had stopped short.

"Not exactly. No, Janet, I don't wish to live my life again."

"Had you trouble?" was her next question.

"Yes, some—all have, I suppose. But after a stormy voyage it is pleasant to reach the quiet port."

"Have you reached it?"

"Not quite," he said, with a smile, amused at her questions, "but I see it plainer. The storms are stilled now, Janet, and I am brought into quiet and peace."

"I am glad you don't like light hair best," she presently said, returning, with the persistence of childhood, to the same subject.

He laughed, and asked, "Why?"

"Because—because I've got such dark hair."

"Yes," he said, stroking her head; "nice soft, dark hair."

"Miss Russell calls it elf-locks. And Miss Anna says it is hideous because it won't twist and curl," she said, tossing her head. "But," she added, "I don't care what *they* say, if *you* like it—only I thought you didn't."

"Well, here is Betty, ready to see you to bed. Make haste, before Miss Russell wants Betty, or she may not be pleased. You are warmer now, eh?—warm and content?"

"Yes, quite warm—and content."

He stooped and kissed her forehead, then left the kitchen.

"Oh, Betty, wasn't it nice? just as I was so very miserable too."

"Indeed, miss! But what'll the ladies say, 'gin they come for to know of this vagary of yours?"

"I don't care a pin what they say or do now, Betty; I've had my pleasure, you see, and if I must pay for it, I don't much care."

"Well, well! you be a curious one, I'm sure! Any one would be surprised to hear your words."

"I am very hungry, Betty."

"Hungry? oh, then I'll soon satisfy you," and she trudged off for some bread-and-butter and milk.

"Well, my dear! and so all went off well; and I hope you enjoyed yourself, miss," Betty said, when Janet was eating her supper.

"I am sure I did not."

"And why not, dear?"

"Oh, I don't know,—but I liked nothing, only looking at Miss Rose's beautiful picture; except just the very last thing —you know what I mean. Betty! there was the face of a boy, and he was so like my papa, I couldn't keep thinking of it all, and it—it made my heart sad. Betty, he was so handsome—quite the handsomest man you ever saw—"

"Indeed, now Miss Janet, I'll not dispute with 'ee. It is nat'ral for a child to judge so of a parent; but *I* think master's just the handsomest man ever was born—so tall and grand like."

"My papa was not tall, certainly; but, for all that, he is much, *much* prettier than Mr. Jacob! He has beautiful

curly brown hair, just like the boy's in the picture; and then —he dresses, I mean he *did* dress, so much nicer than 'master.' But we won't quarrel, Betty. I shall fight for my papa, and you for master, so don't look glum."

"Only sorry, miss; sorry for your trial. To be parted from father, and to have no mother! Sure and 'tis hard for 'ee, and I am often forgetting it; but the Almighty will make it up to ye, Miss Janet; if not in this world in the next."

Janet threw her arms round Betty's neck, and gave her a long and passionate kiss.

"Ah! sure, that child has a heart in her, whatever they may say," Betty thought.

CHAPTER XI.

BETTY'S FEARS.

The little dark-eyed stranger who had been so suddenly and strangely thrown upon them, became to all intents a fixture in Queen's Terrace. She had been brought there by an impulse, rather than any sober reflection; an impulse acting through the Russell idiosyncrasies.

Yet, instead of Miss Russell's hobby of rearing her as a pattern housemaid, or Anna's theories of education being put into practice, there she was, a tender invalid, requiring care and comfort. There was no longer need of self-assertion on her part to be considered a lady. Every one in the house silently acknowledged the claim. Two of the parties at least were a little taken in; at all events, they had not reckoned on the position she had fallen into. There she was, however, part and parcel of the family, their very differences and perversities concerning her hedging her in the tighter. She acted as a perpetual safety-valve for all the uncontrolled steam in the shape of irritation and discontent. The constant reminding her of her position became a necessity to Miss Russell; and the constant exclamations at the impropriety of lounging on a sofa, and lack of energy, were

delightful to the busy Anna. To the world, she was the adopted child of wealthy single people ; and the subject of envy or pity, varying according to the character of the speaker.

At home she was everything by turn, according to the humour of the ladies. Towards Mr. Russell her feelings were peculiar. She knew well that in his eyes she was completely one of them,—a member of the family. With his natural habit of putting aside worldly cares and living on ideal thoughts, he once for all accepted the fact, that she was henceforth to be provided for, and it ceased to be a matter of doubt or trouble. At first he was uneasy for her, and felt the unfitness of his sisters for the charge, but with his accustomed faith in his eldest sister, he soon persuaded himself that he knew nothing about it, and gave up interfering accordingly, only now and then, when paying the usual money to Miss Russell, he asked if more was not needed for Janet's use, and this was negatived with angry wonder, so that he was convinced afresh of her superiority and his own natural extravagance.

His silent look of approval was Janet's dearest pleasure, and she would patiently bear many a cross, had she a chance of gaining it. As greatly did she dread his sad grave rebuke. She told Betty it always gave her a "cold chill."

She would listen for the sound of his voice, or even his foot on the stairs ; and when day followed day without his coming into her room, she became unusually spiritless and dejected.

The so seldom seeing him was a great loss to Janet ; but as she was now separated from the family circle, "the ladies much disapproved of his being with her of an evening," and

he soon gave it up. Now and then he left his book to look round the room, and sigh a little, and wonder what was missing. Then if her name was mentioned, he knew how dear an object of interest the little girl had become, and he questioned his sisters as to her health, and silently wished for the time when she might again be among them. When he saw her, he thought her grown more gentle, and believed that her illness and the petting he fancied she had, was working good. His sisters assured him that Janet had everything she could want—all that Dr. Dean ordered, even to the port wine ; but Jacob did not fully know of the shadow which embittered all these things. Not hearing his sisters' severe speeches, he forgot them. He was but too glad to fancy the child ministered to as she had been during the height of her fever.

"Amusement" was prescribed by Dr. Dean ; and, though she was considered rather old for it, Janet had a doll.

How she loved it, cried over it, and passionately hugged it, no one in the house ever knew. She shrank more and more from betraying, by look or gesture, any of the strong feelings which so often made her heart beat and her face flush. To Miss Russell she was generally grave and demure, and often hard ; to Anna's never-failing vivacity and chatter she gave scornful looks and answers. Anna lectured her for it, but to others she always asserted that "Janet had a great deal of character."

One evening—a summer evening—the Miss Russells were out, and Betty having hurried over her work, went up to Janet, thinking she might be dull.

The window was open, and a bee was buzzing round a box of sweet mignonette. The water looked blue and sparkling,

and everything without was gay and joyful and full of life.

Janet was on the couch, lying on her face apparently, her arm round her doll, and her hair, which was again grown long, fell about her white slender throat, and over the cushion.

Betty came on tip-toe, thinking she slept, and softly drew the curtain across to keep out the fresh breeze. Then she sat down, and watched the people pass.

Happy groups of children with wooden spades and baskets, or laden with pebbles or seaweed; ladies with thick veils and books and shawls, going to enjoy the flowing tide quietly; and gay, fluttering butterflies, in pretty new summer muslins and bright parasols and transparent bonnets—these were the promenade people. And then soon was heard the Wareham band. It was so bright and glittering that Betty shaded her eyes, and her feet moved unconsciously as the breeze brought the tune to her ear. A deep, hysterical sob made her turn anxiously to the couch.

Janet had not moved, she was still lying with her face on the pillow, but the hand that clasped the doll was jerked as if with some violent effort to be still.

Another uncontrollable sob! "My dear Miss Janet! I thought you were asleep. What is it, dear? Are you ill?" and Betty tenderly turned her round.

"Go away, Betty, and leave me!" she sobbed out; and then, as if the power of self-command was lost, she gave way to a violent and passionate burst of weeping.

Betty was distressed. She fetched some camphor-water, and did all she could think of, but Janet sobbed on.

"If you could but sit up and look out of window, and hark to the music, my dear—"

"Oh, no! no! that's it,—that's it!" At last she lay back exhausted, still sobbing, but more gently, and she laid the doll in her bosom.

"Maria and I are the only dull and wretched ones, ain't we?" she said, as if addressing it.

"Missis is going to speak about having a Bath-chair for you, Miss Janet; and then you'll get out of a time, and feel more cheerful and strong."

"Oh Betty, I won't stay here! I can't bear it—"

"Oh miss, and every one so kind, and master so anxious to get you every comfort!" said Betty, in a slightly reproving tone.

"Is he? He never comes near me. And I know—oh I can see plain enough that all I have is grudged. I hear what people say when they come here; though they don't think I understand. Betty! I wish now I could sweep and scrub. I wish—I wish I was strong and well; I wouldn't stay here then."

After a pause, she asked, in a quiet hushed tone of voice, pressing "Maria" closer to her, "Are there any ships that ever go to Botany Bay from here? You needn't stare so, Betty, and shake your head. As soon as ever I am strong, you'll see! I am sorry to leave *you*—but I'll get on board ship. I'll dress myself like a boy, and work, and do anything to get to *him*—to papa! I am not such a child as they think." She continued in an excited manner, seeing Betty made no answer, "I have been used to a different life. As to being shut up here, and begrudged everything I eat, and drink, and wear—I won't stand it. Why did they take me? Not for love; oh no; they don't know what love is, do they, Maria?" And she hugged and kissed the doll with passionate energy.

"My dear Miss Janet—"

"Don't, Betty; you're very kind and very good. I love you! but I am lone, and dull, and miserable; and no one cares for me now that papa and Tom are gone!" and here she burst again into tears.

"Oh, hush, my dear, don't take on so. 'Tis on the spirits, and all owing to so much confinement," said Betty, hastily brushing away a tear from her own eye. "It is very like —I'm almost sure—master will be coming to see you; he is all alone this evening. And now I must go and get his tea. So don't cry, my dear; but hark to the music, or take one of the books of prints and look at."

"The only picture I like is Miss Rose's godson, for he is like my papa. As to the music"—and her voice faltered—"it is that makes me so wretched."

Betty went down stairs puzzled and sad, but quite determined to speak to "master," now that he was alone. He was, apparently, enjoying his book; but in that kind of way which admits of laying it down now and then and thinking. He sat in an elbow, though hardly an easy, chair, rather behind the curtain, but within reach of the summer air and the varied sounds. He had a dreamy look, and did not appear to notice Betty as she came in and removed the table cover.

"A fine evening, sir!"

"Yes, very;" and he took up the book and bent over it.

"If you please, sir—excuse me, but I think Miss Janet's very low in the spirits."

"What?"

"Very dull and mopy, sir. I thought perhaps whether, if you wasn't particular busy, you would just go and cheer her up a bit."

"To be sure I will—that is, I will try; but I am not such a very cheering companion, I fear."

"Sir, her heart's nigh breaking ofttimes. No one knows her thoughts; she's quite different from children in general."

"I thought her so calm and contented," sighed Jacob; "but she must be dull; and she is ill. She has all she needs, I trust, Betty?"

"Her body is well cared for, sir; but Miss Janet is a strange young lady. It don't do to leave a young creature so much alone, I believe; in particular, one who has, as one may say, passed through the waters of affliction. Sir, you'd be frightened did you come to see her sometimes. Bless me, sir, her eyes look so wild, and she says such things! Missis, you see, is so well guided herself, and never knew the troubles that child has; and missis naturally don't understand it, nor Miss Anna neither."

"She ought to have girls of her own age," said Jacob, looking very grave.

"Well, sir, the Miss Mitchells do come, but you see Miss Janet don't take to them particklar. You know, sir, Miss Bridget is not over mirthful, and has a fashion of axing questions, which Miss Janet don't like, sir."

Jacob closed his book and strode up stairs to Janet's room. He grieved to see her tear-stained face, and to hear her sad-toned indifferent voice. It was not what a young girl's should be, or what her's had been. Something was surely wrong. It was a great effort, for Jacob was shy, and so unaccustomed to exert himself to help others in the way of talking, that he hardly knew how to begin. But his heart was in it. Something in the child took his fancy; some-

thing about her recalled past days, and struck a chord which had long been hushed and still.

"When are you to appear again below? It is dull for you here," he said, taking her thin and hot hand in his.

"The ladies don't like my lying down; and Dr. Dean says I must," said Janet, with the shade of a smile breaking out.

"Oh!" was the answer. He had touched on forbidden ground, he felt. "Do you like reading?"

"Sometimes; when my head doesn't ache, sir."

"Poor child!" and he stroked her hand, which she did not withdraw as she invariably did from Mr. Lewis. "Would you like me to read to you?"

"Oh, yes, sir; I think—"

"Why do you call me 'sir?' It is very formal. Are you afraid of me, Janet?"

She blushed up as she took an exploring look into his face. "I don't know, sir." Then correcting herself, for she was truthful even to bluntness, "I mean yes—a little."

"Indeed! And is that why I am to be 'sir?'"

Janet laughed. "The ladies—Miss Russell said, I ought to—"

"Oh!" again he answered quickly, "perhaps I had better call you 'ma'am,' and that will be tit for tat."

Janet smiled really now, and turning round so as to face him entirely she said, after another long look—

"I like being a little afraid of you."

"Umph," said Jacob, amused, "that is a queer thing. I don't think I half understand little ladies of your age; but I should like to be better acquainted."

"But you don't like talking, do you, sir?"

"How did you find that out, hey? Well, Janet, I don't know that I am a great talker, but there is nothing I like better than a tête-à-tête with a few persons; and I think you are one of them."

"Am I?" with a bright look; and then, after a pause, "Do you like me, sir?"

"I do. Do you doubt it?"

"I don't know. I am glad of it. Will you always like me?" she added, shifting herself closer to him, and laying her other hand on his.

He did not answer immediately. His heart was moved.

She quickly withdrew both hands and the colour rose high in her face.

"Don't say so if you don't. You won't, I know!"

"My dear child, how quickly you take alarm and offence! What a fiery spirit it is! But, Janet, I was going to say it is rash to make promises, and I am old enough to know that one's feelings are changeable, and that we cannot reckon on them for long; we must take the present, and leave the future in other hands. But I believe—I am nearly sure—I shall always like you; that you will be, as you now are, very dear to me. Do you believe this? Will you trust me, and take me for a friend; a friend to stand instead of your father, eh, Janet?"

A dim softness gathered in her eyes as she put back her hand into his; but she said nothing.

He pressed her hand gently. "Yes, you and I will be fast friends, and not misunderstand each other, Janet. I am a lonely-hearted man, though I have good and kind sisters. Some day I will tell you something of my former life, when I was anything but the old sober fellow you take me for now.

I believe you think me a very grim gentleman indeed, who can roar and look very stern when provoked, eh?"

"No, I don't—at least, not exactly. When I first saw you I thought you were like— I can't tell you what," she added, colouring up. Presently she said, "I am afraid I cost a great deal of money—don't I?"

Jacob smiled. "What do you know about money, child?" Then he added gravely, and in a voice of much feeling, "Janet, remember this, that whatever I, or we, may do for you, it is amply, fully repaid by the gain you may be to us in return. Your young spirit may bring fresh vigour and life to us all. Especially to me are you a gain; remember that always, Janet. And now I will read to you."

He fetched a book of travels, which was well illustrated. Partly reading and partly talking of distant lands, he amused and interested her; and soon the atlas was required, and, by degrees, the small thin fingers sought and pointed out Sydney harbour, looking up wistfully as she did so.

"You would like to hear of that country?"

She smiled, and said "Yes;" and, after another pause, a quiet earnest "Thank you," was breathed, expressing very much of gratitude and relief.

He read till day-light waned, and long before "the ladies" returned, Janet was asleep, her hand fast locked in his.

From that time Jacob turned a deaf ear to his sisters' objections to his visiting Janet and reading to her.

Miss Russell was astonished and somewhat nettled at this unusual rebellion on his part; she said, "Certainly Jacob was getting obstinate as he grew older." She was puzzled, but after a few talks with him, she deemed it wisest to let it

pass, and allow him his own way, consoling herself with the idea that he would soon grow tired of it.

Anna said it was very ridiculous of him. She was forbidden to teach Janet at all, and here was Jacob with books and maps every evening. Where was the difference? Dr. Dean said amusement was necessary, and seconded Jacob by informing them of the gradual but certain improvement which was taking place. So Anna was silenced; only she told her troubles to her friend Mr. Lewis, who abundantly sympathised, and expressed his fears that Mr. Russell's teaching and Anna's would be very different indeed, and the poor child after all would lose a great deal.

Then Jacob and the child were left in peace, and Janet was in no hurry to be ordered downstairs.

She learnt to love her room. Her doll was neglected and laid aside, while she prepared answers to questions which Jacob left for her, to be done or left undone as she felt disposed. They touched on many subjects, from geography to arithmetic, from history to grammar. It gave her occupation to search in books for the information: it aroused her interest and brought out powers of no common order.

Long and whimsical were the conversations held between the teacher and pupil. Jacob was well informed—his mind was full of quaint stores. On many points he found an answering mind in the girl that he had never before met with.

As spring came, her colour returned, her hair was long again, and her doctor ordered her to go out. A Bath-chair was hired, and then the têtes-à-tête were adjourned to the cliff path, to the mill, or the beach; or sometimes

they went round the lanes to see the progress of the budding greenery and find wild flowers. It was hard to say which was most pleased at a bunch of primroses and violets. When they rested, he told her tales instead of reading; and Betty's fears vanished. She heard no more of the ship.

CHAPTER XII.

A BOLD STEP.

The good pleasant time could not always last.

A day came when Janet was well and strong enough to be a parlour guest. Then many an old rub and grievance was revived, but it was better borne. Something of Mr. Russell's spirit of endurance and forbearance was caught by Janet; and, at all events to please him, she often bit her lips and kept silence when much provoked, and checked the scornful smile and haughty toss of the head.

Fortunately for her, Anna's mind was fully occupied just then with an infant-school, which was lately established at New Wareham; so that she had not much time or much inclination for directing Janet's studies. Miss Russell insisted on daily tasks of mending and plain work; but that was no great hardship, and for the rest, it was left pretty much to Jacob's somewhat desultory mode of teaching. The pupil was always willing, so that every little moment they could seize was made the most of.

"I shall not be at dinner to-day," said Jacob one morning.

"Why is that?" inquired Miss Russell.

"I am going to the Rectory at five, and shall therefore

remain at the office; we have much work to get through there just now."

"To the Rectory? Is there a party?"

"No; but it is their practising night, and Mrs. Grant asked me to join."

"Practising what?"

"Singing. The schoolboys practise once a week."

"Schoolboys!—singing! Hear that! In my day they were content to learn their Catechism, or at most reading and ciphering."

"Mr. Lewis likes our children to learn singing," put in Anna.

"He may. Mr. Lewis is an excellent man, but he makes mistakes sometimes. However, I don't disapprove entirely of singing psalms and hymns; but I suspect Mr. Grant does not confine himself to that—hey, Jacob?"

"Not entirely."

"Ah! I thought as much. I knew it! And pray do you sing?"

"I do sometimes join."

"I guessed it! Oh! Jacob, Jacob! your love of singing and music has wrought you mischief enough. Remember what your father said one day,—I can hear him now. He said, 'Jacob, you fiddle away your senses.' And now you are actually taking it up again, good lack! good lack!"

"I have serious thoughts of doing so," said Jacob quietly. "I believe it would be a gain to us all; and Janet is fond of it, and ought to play."

"Hear him!" cried Miss Russell, greatly excited, and lifting both hands. "Jacob, you will end in driving me mad! You were idle in your youth—you are positively wild

in your— old age, I was going to say; but I forget you haven't reached to that. You need not smile; it is no joke, I assure you. Your extraordinary peculiar ways horrify me; they do indeed. It was wholly a freak of yours that we ever charged ourselves with that girl—a pretty affair! What it is to end in I don't know, I am sure. Pray, pray don't add to the mischief by returning to your old ways. Music! music! What have you,—what has she to do with it? The less the better. It is the root of all wickedness in man; the beginning of all kinds of sin and folly in women!"

"Well, well, sister, don't agitate yourself, we will talk it over another time. I shall do nothing rash, I hope. I really can't see what harm a pianoforte can do."

"Did he say a piano?—did he? Oh, defend me! he will buy one! That boy—man I mean—will bring me in sorrow to the grave before he has done. As to you, Miss Jane, for I suppose it is some of your doings,—have you been wheedling him into this?"

Jacob was gone, and Janet, foreseeing she should come in for some of the storm, had wisely retreated, so that Miss Russell, on looking round, found herself alone, except Jacob's cat. She relieved herself by kicking it away, and then in her hurry of mind managed to drop a row of stitches.

At this unlucky juncture Mrs. Mitchell was ushered in, and with the rustling of her starched dress a whole volume of merriment and good-nature seemed to enter also.

She did not care for the stern face; she took, unbidden, a chair, and asked after Anna and Jacob and Janet, all in a breath, and was presently deep in a list of Wareham news, to relate which she had come.

Miss Russell relaxed a little, but the shade gathered again as Mrs. Mitchell proceeded to say she had met Jacob walking by Janet's chair, and how everybody talked of his attention to the sick child, and his wonderful devotion to her amusement.

"I see nothing to astonish any one," remarked Miss Russell, drily; for, like Dr. Johnson with Garrick, she allowed no one to find fault with her brother but herself.

"Astonish? oh dear no. Only it sets people regretting he should remain a bachelor, with his domestic tastes. He was certainly made for something very different."

"No such a thing; my brother is a thorough bachelor, and will always be so. He hates ladies' society; and as to his taking notice of this child, it is all from some vagary. Besides, Jacob is kind-hearted, and he pities her situation. Really I will thank people to keep their remarks to themselves. As if they could know what his tastes are!"

"Is she never to go to school?"

"School! no, indeed. I don't approve of so much education."

"Quite right, cousin; I agree with you. I often say to my girls, 'La, what is the use of so much practising and reading and all that? Better learn to darn a stocking and make a pudding. That's what men like in their wives,'" and Mrs. Mitchell gave one of her hearty laughs. "You are quite right," she added, "not to let Janet learn music; I declare my head often aches with so much of it: and where's the use? I often ask."

"As to that," replied Miss Russell, "perhaps Janet will have to earn her own bread; and to be a governess, music is essential."

Thus, out of contradiction to Mrs. Mitchell, was she led to come round a little to Jacob's idea.

She kept this strictly to herself, however, and a long time passed without the subject being again alluded to.

But Jacob had not forgotten it or given it up.

A delightful evening, in which old glees and catches were sung to his heart's content, and where he was, half in spite of himself, led on to give his friends many an old favourite song, only added strength to his purpose. Jacob had a rare musical voice and ear, and was truly a proficient in the science of melody.

Returning from the Rectory on a moonlight night, with the silvered sea lying below, and the sweet sounds still ringing in his ear, he made up his mind to brave his sister's wrath again, and purchase a pianoforte at the very first opportunity.

"She is given up to us now, and it is our duty to educate her, and to provide her all lawful pleasure. It will be good for her—for us all; yes, even for me, if confined to set hours. It must be done."

So he commissioned his clerk to look out, and very soon—long before Jacob expected—a second-hand upright instrument, "as good as new," was put up at a sale. With some little excitement Jacob attended, and bid for the pianoforte. To his joy and some surprise, it was knocked down to him at a very reasonable sum.

Thus the Rubicon was passed. But it cost Jacob two nights' walking to and fro the room, before he made up his mind in what manner to announce the fact to his sister.

When he did so, she was too much upset for speech, and she made him feel somewhat uncomfortable and half

regretful when she walked out of the room without one word or look.

Anna chattered away her objections, easing her mind a little by telling him he was "too bad," "very extravagant and worldly;" but by degrees his quiet replies had effect, and she reconciled herself to the innovation by determining that her special class of "infants" should come and practise their hymns every week.

It came!—a spring cart covered with matting stopped before the house. The door-bell rang, and Betty, with red cheeks, inquired solemnly where it was to be put. Miss Russell deigned no sort of answer, and Betty moved about chairs and tables in great excitement and bewilderment.

Anna, become quite a convert since Mr. Lewis had expressed approval of her plan of teaching hymn-singing, skipped about to ascertain the best spot for the new comer. Janet let fall her work to gaze, half hidden behind the window curtain, now frowning disdain at Miss Russell's woeful displeasure—now throwing scornful glances at Anna's voluble vivacity; and then watching Betty and the men with grave and eager interest; lastly, breaking out into a very bright smile, as Mr. Russell's tread was heard, and his face appeared at the door, just in time to superintend the placing.

Miss Russell threw unutterable glances of reproach at him, and directly left the room.

For a moment he felt sorry, but it was too late to recede; and intense expectation of pleasure for himself and another prevailed against his dislike of annoying his sister. He touched the instrument almost with tender and reverent care, and putting his strong shoulder "to the fore," it was soon in its place. Betty's apron was ready to wipe off the

dust; and there it stood, in all its glory of rosewood and crimson silk. It was a great work achieved—a battle won. Perhaps every one felt it to be so, more or less, and it was expressed from Betty's sparkling eyes to Anna's quivering ringlets.

The cart drove off; and Jacob, opening the pianoforte, struck a few chords with a gusto unknown but to a true lover of harmony, who has long been deprived of sweet sounds. Then Janet was called upon, and in spite of a long lack of practice, Jacob was surprised at her power of touch. She was evidently at home on those pretty black and white keys—at home in a double sense; for her thoughts flew quickly back to the days when she played to her father, accompanied very often by his flute.

She inherited a musical talent from both parents, and had a particularly correct ear and refined taste.

It turned out to be a successful move. To Janet it was a never-failing, deep source of happiness, and she rose early to practise in an empty room. Jacob brought out a very old and dear friend, in the shape of a violin, and rummaged out folios of old music. Anna found she had a little voice, and condescended to join in sacred music—besides making Janet accompany the "infant class" as she had threatened. In course of time even Miss Russell acknowledged she liked some slow grave airs which Janet played, and liked their singing psalms and hymns. Jacob took care not to transgress as in old times, and Betty stood on tip-toe in the passage to hear "how beautiful master and Miss Janet sang together."

After some little time the violin was suffered to stand in its case in a corner, instead of being hastily smuggled away

out of sight in an empty room directly the playing was over.

One evening, when Miss Russell was taking a little constitutional quarter-deck walk, she paused before the well-worn case. She said nothing, but she stood before it in a brown study.

Jacob observing it, one of those rare flashes of thorough genial humour lit up his face, which, when it came, no one could withstand. It was often followed by a hearty, low laugh, such as one seldom hears in any but a child, and this was very seldom heard or seen. After watching her for a moment he rose, and placing his hands on her shoulders he said, "Do you think an evil spirit or wicked genius lives in that case, sister? You seem to bid it avaunt."

"Pshaw, pshaw, Jacob," said she, twitching herself away from his hold. "There is nothing to laugh at that I can see. Yes! I do believe that a vast deal of evil is shut up in that case; your evil genius—though, by the way, I don't approve of such expressions. Pooh! nonsense, Jacob," seeing the look of intense fun still on his face; "don't be so peculiar! Yes! I do firmly believe that those strings which give forth such strange sounds were invented by nothing good, and for the destruction of weak deluded souls. That very instrument," added she, pointing to it with stiff dignity, "that very instrument was a seducing temptation to your youth: you know yourself that it led you into mischief and evil."

A cloud chased away the sunshine from Jacob's face as he answered, "That was my own fault. Anything so indulged in might have the same effect. That was the abuse of a fine blessing."

While all this was passing at Queen's Terrace, Mr. Russell did not omit occasionally to visit Janet's stepmother at Exeter. His visits had so little comfort or satisfaction in them, however, that he ceased speaking of them to Janet. Mrs. Nairn had found friends to help her, and had now only one child to provide for, the youngest having died since she left Wareham. No tidings came of the exiled man, though Janet never forgot to expect and hope, and felt very troubled and anxious about it.

CHAPTER XIII.

NUMBER ONE WITHOUT A MASTER.

Two years came and went, with little variation to the Russells. Time had strengthened the bond between Jacob and his "pupil," as he now called her, and they had both managed to go a great deal their own way, in spite of the continual contradiction and friction which they met with. It had the effect of an elixir on him, and it was remarked that Mr. Russell grew younger instead of older. Such observations were displeasing to Miss Russell, and she answered Miss Rose once by saying—"More shame for him. It is not intended for people to go against nature and providence. I have no patience with his gallivanting after that child, reading, and fiddling, and singing, and what not! But I can't prevent it. My word goes for nothing."

One would suppose that Miss Russell would tire of repeating the same galling and irritating speeches, since nothing was farther from her mind than parting with Janet. And yet some days it would seem as if her very presence was disagreeable, and as if her being there would bring ruin on the house, from the extra expense she caused. But when her brother tried to make it clear what the additional cost really

amounted to, and offered to pay more into her hands, she angrily bade him hold his tongue and not talk nonsense.

The Russell firm had always been connected with a house in Spain, and many years ago Jacob had been sent there by his father as agent. Just at this time there arose some confusion in the business, and it was suspected that there was unfair dealing abroad. It was desirable for the whole thing to be sifted, and this could only be done by Mr. Russell himself going there. So, after much consultation, and some hours of grave reflection on Miss Russell's part, it was decided that he should sail in one of his own ships—the *Wareham Trader*.

Mr. Russell did not seem particularly pleased at the idea, for which his sister rallied him, saying, "He was very perverse. For once, when not desirable, he was eager to go—any excuse for running off to foreign lands! but now that it was a matter of necessity and business, he would rather stay at home."

This, or something else, made Miss Russell more "fidgety," as Betty called it, than ever; or, according to Anna, "Sister was sadly on edge." She could not sit still to knit or tear paper, but was constantly moving about from room to room. It was a trying time for all in the house, for Miss Russell's senses seemed more acute than they ever were.

Nothing escaped her. Janet's hoards of dried flowers and shells, the attempts at drawing, the sheets of scribbled paper, which girls of her age are addicted to, all came under the ken of the green spectacles, and brought forth anger and annoyance on the unfortunate offender. Side, but telling hints, which stung Janet painfully, were given, to the effect that it was high time such doings were stopped, and that

when Jacob was gone, "Jane" would find that she would not be so much indulged and spoilt.

How Janet dreaded that time! Perhaps if she had known the many battles Miss Russell fought with herself against sundry fears and prejudices, she would not have been so surprised at her irritability.

Anna entered into the subject with her usual playfulness, and, as she called it, "enthusiasm."

"I make a point of looking at everything in its best light," she said. "I don't indulge in fears, and Spain is such a dear romantic country, it must be quite an intellectual treat, if only poor Jacob had a little more sense of beauty, and wasn't quite so slow. Fancy seeing monks, and Moorish palaces, and oranges growing in the gardens, and those dreadful dear mysterious bandits, and Spanish mantillas. And he's so fond of music, he will be sure to like hearing a guitar or lute under his window, and all that sort of romance."

"Romance, indeed! I hope it will all be—be—swallowed up—anywhere— That is, I do hope Jacob isn't quite such a fool! You ought to be ashamed of such words, Anna! And you call yourself an English woman, forsooth! *I* don't profess to be literary or bookish, but still I can't forget one or two things I read of in my historical studies when I was a girl, and one was about the Armada of Spain. The wretches tried to land here, and tie us all up to stakes as heretics, if they didn't carry us back to their own horrid land, where they have underground prisons, and judges in black masks torture you if you won't kiss the Pope's toe or worship idols. Aye, you may stare over your book, Jacob, but you can't deny it, for all your reading, eh? Come, now wasn't there a fellow called an Armada, who mustered some

hundreds of bloodthirsty tyrants, and came here, or tried to come; but Providence circumvented their designs, and our good Queen Elizabeth rode about herself all in armour to fight them? Yes, that and the Gunpowder Plot are fixed in my memory, and so they ought to be in every Englishwoman's. You needn't chuckle to yourself, for I'm meaning no joke, Jacob; and what fun you can discover I can't comprehend. And besides all this, I've no liking or respect for the black-eyed women we hear of. All very improper, I am sure, and if I remember rightly, you were not the same man after mixing with the papists. Dear me, I do hope you will be steady, and surely, now you are old enough——"

"Old enough to keep out of scrapes, eh, sister? Well, let us hope so," and a half suppressed smile of amusement was still on his face, as he took a turn up and down.

Janet sat somewhat apart, and by the window. Mr. Russell came by her chair.

"And what makes you so grave, little maiden? You won't forget me, I hope?"

"I wish I was going with you. Can't you take me?" she said, playing with the hand he had laid on her shoulder.

"As cabin boy, I suppose?"

"Well, I shouldn't much mind. I would be that any day to get to Sydney, or to keep with you. I don't like staying here at all."

"Courage! I shall leave you plenty of work, and the time will soon pass. How eager I shall be to return again, now! Janet, you must write me nice long letters."

"Then ask her to let me," she whispered, as Miss Russell moved from her chair. "Ask her, or you know she won't let me write."

"Sister," he said, cheerfully; "I shall hope to hear full and particular accounts of you all, remember!"

"Nonsense! What's the use of saying that? You know I never write letters; and, besides, what will there be to tell you?"

"Then make this child write for you. Tell me! Why, I shall want to hear about everything."

"Nonsense! great waste of time. And consider the postage! You will have enough to do to attend to your business. Don't teach the child to love letter-writing—the bane of youth."

This was not promising. "Well," continued Jacob, "I shall hope to hear, notwithstanding. It will be an exercise for Janet, and teach her spelling. Now, tell me what shall I bring you home? hey, sister Anna, what shall it be?"

"Oh, I should like a Spanish fan amazingly," said Anna, who was intent on some manufacture of cardboard and gilt-paper, as a parting gift to her brother.

"What is the use of a fan?" cried Miss Russell. "I hope you won't forget to bring a stock of real Spanish liquorice, Jacob, that will be useful and acceptable."

"I won't forget; and now child, what will you have?"

"Of course," said Janet, brightly, "I must ask for a rose, you know; and you'll get into one of the old enchanted Moorish palaces, and an old creature like a dragon will——"

"Nonsense, Jane," said Miss Russell, severely. "Do you know you are talking of what is not true? Don't let me hear you say such things! I suppose you have been studying those poisonous fairy tales. Oh, fie, Jacob! Just like you, to tell her such rodomontade."

Janet was glad that Betty came to draw the curtains, and

so hide the laugh she could not stifle. But her heart was very heavy that last night, and her whole soul was in the fervent embrace she gave him in parting.

He turned away, too sad to return to his sisters immediately. He stepped out on the Terrace to try and subdue the presentiment which seemed to have crept over him—a presentiment of future trouble—a chilling conviction that all the sweet, pleasant hours he had spent with "the child" were gone never to return.

Janet awoke the next morning to listen to his step about the house. But she had been forbidden to rise and see him off. Daylight had scarcely dawned when he wrung Betty's hand, and commending them to her kind care, specially the "little stray lamb," he followed a sailor bearing his portmanteau to the quay, and was soon on board the tight little brig, and going out with the tide, and to the song of "Cheerily O!"

At breakfast Janet appeared with a very swollen face and red eyes, and to bear as well as she could her changed life. Very changed it was; dull and monotonous! But Miss Russell was not "crosser, if so cross," Janet assured Betty, as she had always been.

"Oh, her bark is worse than her bite," was the answer. "Her's a good lady, and master you see is the apple of her eye. I know it, though nobody else do. Her will be kind to you for his sake now his back is turned, I know. Never you mind, Miss Janet, we'll get along well enough; and please God send master home safe, the sooner the better, he'll find us all pleasant and comfortable like I hope."

CHAPTER XIV.

"He is all the world to me;
Where'er his footsteps go
Turns my heart, I feel too well."

"For I loved her—loved. Aye, loved her
As man just once may love."

PREPARING TO BE INDEPENDENT.

It is summer; Wareham is unusually full of visitors. But except a few new lodging-houses, and a few more graves in the old churchyard, there is little or no change.

The cliffs stand up as proudly, and the waves beat over the pebbles "in youthful buoyance, fresh and strong as on their natal day," the very coals in the wharf look as if they had not been moved. No. 1 in Queen's Terrace blinks as heretofore at the setting sun. But two more years have told their tale. Two years have passed since Janet felt that the light of the house was extinguished;—two long dreary years, and the master is not returned.

One tangled coil was followed by another; roguery and mismanagement had been rife. Jacob, always hoping he should leave directly, had been detained by one thing after another, and the *Wareham Trader* had twice returned

without him. She was now due, and many a glass was turned anxiously to scan the home-bound vessels, and much gossip took place by the loungers on Wareham Quay, as to her probable cause of detention. There had been rough weather, and of late the wind had set dead against her. Still it was time she should be heard of through some channel, and many people looked anxious in consequence.

Miss Russell's eyes are decidedly weaker, and Betty is not quite so much up to all the work, so that an efficient helpmate has been found for her; and Miss Russell sits, for hours together, silent and still, without interfering in the housework.

Janet is no longer a child. She is small and slight, and some people think beautiful. Others say that there is something in her expression positively unpleasant, and destroying all beauty. Strangers meeting her are apt to look again, and, inquiring who she is, are told that it is a "poor orphan," or a "foundling," or an "adopted child of the Russells," according to the fancy of the speaker. She sits much alone during the summer weather, Betty having contrived to settle her into possession of the deserted study. This serves as bed and sitting room, and here she spends much time; for Janet is grown studious, and she makes her head ache over French grammar and Italian verbs. She works hard: it is for independence. The independence of a governess! She finds her situation irksome; she cannot brook living on charity. With increasing years, she has learnt less and less to like Miss Russell's allusions; and as she gazes wistfully on the gay crowds enjoying the sea breezes, strangers who come and go, she longs, with intense longing, to be free to go out into the world—to see something of life. She feels that she has gifts

which might raise her above the dead level of life in Queen's Terrace. She wonders, with youthful eagerness, what lies before her. As to staying for ever in that house, with those two old ladies— she cannot and will not do it! Beyond those walls—even beyond Wareham—lies a great world. She longs to explore it—to taste life, to be up and doing—yes, even if it involves suffering!—anything rather than the monotony of household drudgery, and to be grudged all she costs! Oh, that she had wings to fly away!—she often sighs, as she looks over the wide sea, and remembers what lands and nations exist beyond those curling waves.

"What, now, when master is a coming back, miss?" asks Betty.

"Yes!—oh, yes! I dread his return. I long for it, yet I dread it. They have taken care to destroy every bit of pleasure I could have, by hedging me up with cautions not to do this, not to say that, because I am no longer a child, and so on. Besides, he won't care for me now."

Betty was uneasy; she believed her master would be sorely vexed, did he know the state of things. "The ladies" had no sympathy for a "young thing." They meant to be very good and kind, but a few sharp words spoilt it all.

Miss Russell's natural habit of saving, and fearing every outlay as extravagance which would bring ruin, had increased with all the late trouble about the business. It was a constant excuse, and she eyed every piece of bread that was consumed with Gorgon severity.

There was excuse to be found for her in the trials of her youth, when her father was nearly bankrupt, and when she was obliged to count every farthing, and by her own sole energy and courage greatly tended to redeem their affairs.

Anna shook her curls, and did not care for "sister's croaking." She was too busy and pleased to hearken to such forebodings, and, in her shrill rattling way, preached cheerfulness to her sister. Then, when Miss Russell was particularly "on edge," she made work for herself in the town, and did not appear for the day. But Janet could not avoid the evil, and her sensitive temper winced at every word and look, till she panted for the time when she should be able to work for herself, and honestly earn her right to eat and drink, and buy herself a pair of gloves or shoes, without having to ask for them, or wait till their ragged condition drew the unwilling attention of others.

But Janet was young yet, and she was diffident of her powers of teaching; so she buried herself in grammars and "Bonnycastle," and only paused to indulge in bright dreams, strangely in opposition with her desire of being a governess. These dreams partly owed their origin to the companionship of a young friend who had for some months been a great deal with Janet.

Mrs. Spencer, a friend of Miss Rose, was a widow, well off, and fond of moving about from place to place with her two daughters. At present, she was much taken with the air of Wareham, and had rented a house there for a year. She had one son, Miss Rose's godson, whose picture, as a child, had been so much admired by Mr. Russell, some years ago. Mr. Spencer had been travelling, but was expected eagerly every day by his mother and sisters.

The younger Miss Spencer was not much older than Janet; then came the brother George, and then, with a gap of many years, came the eldest of what once was a tolerably large family—Eleanor. She was very different in character and

tastes from her young brother and sister. It was said that she had met with a great disappointment; and she was very grave, if not gloomy, in manner. She and Anna, from a sympathy in the matter of bazaars and infant schools, became firm allies. Miss Spencer liked Wareham, and approved of Mr. Lewis. It might be fancied that a man so very popular as he was would not think much of one lady's good opinion; but Mr. Lewis thought a great deal of even one person's opinion. He was highly pleased and flattered at Miss Spencer's admiration, and naturally there was some little gossip in Wareham about it. Mr. Lewis had been a very constant visitor at the Russells, in Jacob's absence; but though he had always plenty of work for Anna to do, and much to talk over with her, people nodded their heads, and asserted "*that* wasn't the attraction."

The minister had been seen to look very long and with evident admiration at one who had grown up among them—grown from a small, sickly child into a bud of rare beauty.

His "very kind attention" to Janet made her an object of envy to many persons. When rallied about it, he looked mysterious though pleased, and after a little playful badinage he would say, "Well, certainly he did look upon her as something belonging to him—as one whose dawning beauty he had always seen and appreciated, even when it was under a shadow—and in whom he had greatly interested himself. He gently deprecated any gossip on the subject—it would hurt the "poor girl;" and of course—deeply as he admired her—still there was much against . . . . &c. &c. His sentences were never finished, and people were left to draw their own conclusion. Some were quite sure Mr. Lewis was wiser than to be caught by a pretty young face, and would look for a little money,

for his own income was not large. Others thought it a very interesting affair, and were sure that Mr. Russell would give her something handsome, and wondered at her good fortune.

Janet lived in happy ignorance of such remarks. She dreaded his well-known ring and knock, and thought his trick of staring insufferable, and his soft appeals to her opinion and squeezing shakes of the hand still worse. She only wondered, sometimes, how it was she did not offend him, so cold and haughty as she always was. She supposed he had a very forgiving, amiable temper, and that she must be very wrong to dislike him so thoroughly, and after a more than usually disdainful answer, she had fits of remorse and penitence, and would try to be more gracious at the next meeting.

Miss Anna Russell, with all her failings or accomplishments, was not one of those elderly young people who breathlessly hasten to "settle" themselves—somehow or other,—any way, so as to avoid the rock of spinsterhood which wrecks so many. Her ruling passion was to be important and useful, to be thought a person of taste and feeling, to have friends, and be popular. Matrimony was not her line. She liked to stand alone in her glory. She lived on petty excitements—whether teaching in a school, or distributing soup tickets or tracts, or making "elegant trifles," or begging subscriptions for the Jews or any case of distress. It did not much matter what it was, she was always ready; and Mr. Lewis knew exactly the amount of praise and thanks which would satisfy her. She was a useful and convenient friend, but nothing more. Nor did any one, save honest Betty, ever think of anything else. She, indeed, firmly

believed it would end in "Miss Anna's" being "Mrs. Lewis," and she was very happy in the idea.

Mr. Lewis was always welcome to Queen's Terrace. Even Miss Russell liked his being there. When Mr. Lewis understood that Janet was studying French, he offered himself as a teacher, and persevered in asking for Racine whenever he came, in spite of her evident dislike. But she dared not actually refuse, as Miss Russell and Anna considered it such a favour, and such a condescension in Mr. Lewis. She mentally drew comparisons between this teaching and Mr. Russell's. It did not end in Mr. Lewis's favour!

Such was the state of things this June, when they were expecting Mr. Russell's return daily.

CHAPTER XV.

THE STORM.

The windows rattled, the doors banged—the howling furious wind shook even the well-built tall house in Queen's Terrace. What must have been its effects on the lath-and-plaster rows of lodging houses?

The very borders of lowly sea pink were turned inside out, while the shrubs, the rose trees and myrtles, Wareham's pride, were ruthlessly rooted up or broken down, by the invisible but giant hand that was at work. All night it had blown. Chimneys fell; and showers of light, dry sand were dashed sharply against the windows so as to awake many a frightened visitor, who had hitherto only known Wareham in calm and sunshine.

It was a magnificent sight, these rolling billows, the south-east gale driving them in and tearing their crests to tatters, spreading the cliffs and downs with flakes of tawny foam—foam, thick and yeasty as it is in a storm, when the waters are vexed and turbid. Very different this from the bright white spray which has a rainbow in every bubble, and flies on the wings of a high-tide breeze, making that fairy froth of which the "crispy pancakes" are composed to feed the "little men."

Now, seaweed and shells were angrily shovelled up from their quiet caves below,—pebbles were displaced and thrown far beyond high water mark. The few adventurous spirits who buttoned on "sou'-westers"—and came out saw a grand sight; but it was hard work to keep a footing, either on the Terrace walk or the Quay, and there was such a rush and din that it was difficult to hear what one's neighbour said.

Janet sat, in no dull mood, in her accustomed study. Bright thoughts, she knew not from whence, chased her cares away for the time. A few days ago, when her friend had talked of summer excursions, and in expectation of her brother's return had settled parties and social meetings, Janet had listened absently—so much so as to bring a rallying laugh from Miss Spencer. Then she did not take in any plan of pleasure. Life seemed a miserable cheat—a mere procession of dull hours, only varied by the more or less worry and fret in which fate or chance should clothe them.

Poor Janet! she was often down in the depths. She had not yet learnt to find the key note. She knew not that all these discords were resolving into harmony hidden to her; she had not learnt the refrain of a Christian's song—"All is working for good." According to the mood of the moment she was ardent and hopeful, or depressed and dejected.

Yesterday had been grey and dull. The storm was lowering even then, but the leaden hue of the sky affected the atmosphere. To-day there was a war in the elements. That rolling, mighty wind, with its rushing roar, working ruin; those swift-sailing dark clouds, gathering for the strife, and in their threatening movements leaving a clear spot here and there of intense blue—this roused Janet, though perhaps unconsciously. To some persons there are "voices in the

wind," and in such a storm as the present there is life and power, and that excitement so congenial to a young spirit.

Dream on, young girl, to the music of that wind. There is time yet before life's work awakes you to stern reality—before anxiety and trouble change the face, dimming its fresh brightness by earthly dust, line your smooth brow, or dim your flashing eyes.

Dream on, to the chorus of those booming billows, forget the narrow present, the press of poverty, the chill of heart-loneliness! It is over! that dread monotonous life which irks your panting spirit is even now passing. A new life is at hand. The breeze now blowing opens a fresh page,—childhood with its cares and its joys is over. Behold a new phase in your existence. You ask for life. It is at hand. The cup is prepared and is presented—bitter or sweet, you must drain it to the dregs.

Janet was startled out of her musing fit by her door shutting violently, and Betty's exclamation, "Good now! This wind will tear down the very house next, I believe. Miss Janet, have 'ee heard that the wall out by the sea is a tored right away? and Mr. Mitchell's chimbley's down, and a sight of glass scat all abroad in they hot-houses of his'n."—In moments of excitement Betty's talking was always more broadly Devon.—"'Tis awful, miss! The oldest man in the place don't mind such a storm. Oh, deary me! please God my dear master was but home. I hate to hear them rolling waves of a night. There I lies a listening, and I zeem as if the wind and the waves were telling like— But gemini! what's come to you, Miss Janet? Why you're as fresh as a rose, and there's a glint in your eyes I'd like to see oftener! Sure now, and have you heard news, miss?"

"Where should I hear news, Betty?" said Janet, rising slowly, loth to have her fine castles so soon demolished. "Indeed it is windy!" she added, going to the window. "Look, Betty, the sea is hidden by mist and spray; I can't see the cliff; and look at the grass! turned inside out. Dear, how queer it looks! And there is Mr. Mitchell trying to breast the wind—there goes his hat," and she laughed like a merry child as she watched him. "He is coming here."

"And so he is, for certain, and I'll have to fetch Martha to help hold the door. 'Tis all too heavy for me, I can tell 'ee, in such a wind. But I forgot, here's a note left a while agone, by that smart livery boy down to Mrs. Spencer's, and he was to call for an answer as he comed back along."

Betty left the room, and a half-stifled ring at the door bespoke Mr. Mitchell's presence without. Janet opened her note—a dainty affair, such as ladies' notes should be, well written and well folded.

Miss Spencer knew she excelled in the art of these notelets, and seldom did a messenger leave the house without one for Janet. Sometimes a book was sent or asked for, sometimes a song; excuses were plentiful. To-day it was to account for not calling, as if, thought Janet, the wind had not sufficiently explained that. It also begged her, should it lull at all, to come and spend the evening at Rock Cottage. She wanted to practise some new duets, and to introduce her brother to Janet. "I am so curious to know if he will realize your idea of his picture! I told George you imagined him a little boy with curly brown hair," the note said.

Janet took out her writing desk to answer it, and when her answer was ready, again she sat down to indulge in the luxury of busy fancy, but recollecting herself, fancied Betty

was long in coming for her note, so she opened the door. There was the same rushing, deafening noise in the passage—more indeed, from the rattling of the skylight. Mr. Mitchell's voice was heard through all, and there seemed a kind of bustle—a dead, heavy sound, and then a lull; and then the parlour bell rang sharply and long.

Betty rushed up from the kitchen—"What is it, Miss Janet?" seeing Janet at her door. Without waiting for an answer she went in. The next moment she was out again, looking very white. "The salts! water! Missis has a faint."

Janet fetched a vinaigrette of her own, and went hurriedly into the parlour. Miss Russell lay perfectly insensible on the couch.

Anna, apparently scared, with her hair sticking out in queer fashion, was rubbing her sister's hands. Mr. Mitchell, in his usual attitude, with his hands in his pockets, looked half important, half sorry, and much perplexed. He was saying—

"After all, it may not be. 'Pon my soul and honour, I didn't think Miss Russell would be so overcome! I had no idea! The confounded mist and spray make it so thick that one can hardly see; and there may be a mistake. Yet old Crowther is generally right; his eye is considered first-rate, and he knows every Wareham craft as he would his own mother."

"Can nothing be done?" asked Anna, in a helpless, piteous tone.

"Done! Bless you, a life-boat couldn't live five minutes in such a sea. Good heavens! when I heard the gun, I said directly—"

He was interrupted by Miss Russell showing symptoms of

animation. Betty bathed her temples with tender care. When she opened her eyes, she said,—

"Take me upstairs!"

With help, they got her out of the room, Janet going before to open doors. As soon as she was in her own chair, she bade them all leave her.

"Not alone!" Betty ventured to say.

"Yes, alone. I can ring if I need any one. And tell Mitchell to wait five minutes: I will see him again."

Anna ran down.

"Betty," said Janet, as soon as they were in the passage, "tell me what this is about."

"Good now, my dear Miss Janet, don't take on so. Bless me, but you be as white as missis!"

"Well, tell me—don't keep me in suspense," she said, breathing quickly, and putting great restraint on herself to keep up at all.

"I know nothing, no more nor yourself; but I war'nt 'tis no trifle will make my missis like that."

They went down together. Janet tried to question Anna, but the words would not pass her lips.

Mr. Mitchell had left, saying he would return in a few moments. But Anna's powers of speech were not long in returning.

"Isn't this frightful, Janet? I am surprised to see you stand there so still and quiet! I should think you had more feeling. Oh my dear, my darling brother, shall I never see you again?" And then she burst into an hysterical fit of weeping, which made Betty set to work again with salts, &c. but this time her hands shook, and her eyes were so dim, she did not do much good.

Janet's heart beat so, that she was obliged to sit down: all strength seemed suddenly gone. At last she said, speaking in a very low but distinct voice,—

"Have you heard bad news of Mr. Russell?"

Here Mr. Mitchell came in, banging the door after him.

"The gun again! I heard it but now, as I crossed over. I will go down again to the look-out, and see what can be done.—Eh?"

"Wait," said a husky voice; "Wait!" and Miss Russell, as pale as possible, came in, with her bonnet and cloak. "I will go with you."

To Betty's tearful pleadings "to bide at home," she pushed her aside, and said she had been taken unawares, but, thank God, she had always found strength for any emergency. She would see with her own eyes, and trust to no one.

Mr. Mitchell explained that she could not stand against the wind, and that everything should be done that was possible: Mr. Russell was so much beloved, that every sailor there would stir his energies on his behalf. But Miss Russell cut him short by pointing to the door. Her voice trembled as she said,—

"Anna, don't give way; it's rebelling against Providence. God ruleth the waves of the sea!" and then, taking Mr. Mitchell's arm, she went out.

"What is it, Miss Anna? Oh! what is it?" cried Betty.

"A wreck—my brother—distress guns," was all that could be made out of Anna's weeping and sobs.

Janet went to her room, though so giddy she hardly managed so much. Then she drank some water, and sat down. Was he wrecked? Could it be? Was he even now gone for ever—dead, dead? No; perhaps not that, but in

danger. Danger indeed, if his ship was near land in that storm!

In another five minutes she had her bonnet and shawl on, and, in desperate mood, forced open the front door, and braved the frightful wind.

At first it took away her breath, but, by turning and tacking, she reached a more sheltered street, which led to the Quay. Thither others were bending their steps, and all evidently under excitement, as if going to see something.

What a spectacle it was! Janet held by a post, round which boat-ropes were coiled, and felt glad she had come. Crowds were there, watching a few determined men who silently prepared to unmoor a boat. Between the gusts was heard that ominous sound—a gun. It was immediately answered from shore.

"Ay, ay, let 'em know us hear 'em, if us can do naught else, poor souls!" said the weather-beaten man who stood glass in hand.

Anxious faces grouped about him.

"Can you make out any more, Crowther?"

"Ay; I'd lose my last farden if that isn't the *Wareham Trader*. Bless you! I know her by her jib-boom: and look'ee, d'ye see, her topmast is clean gone. I wouldn't wonder if her helm is gone, for, to my seeming, she's tossed about no way. Seas overboard every moment. She'll drift into they rocks to a dead certainty, and then the Lord deliver them!"

A small thin man, whose face was stern with anxiety, pushed his way among them. He was buttoned up tightly, and came to the steps.

"Oh, Mr. Penn, is it you?"

"Give me a seat, Jack," he said.

"Sir, what good in that? No; let's risk no more lives than is necessary. What good can you do?"

"The good of a clear head. I'll go. If he dies, the world's gone for me. I have a notion in me, and go I must."

There was something so stedfast, so cool, and yet so despairingly sad in him, that no other objection was raised. He stepped into the boat, which, even in the comparatively smooth basin, was dashed to and fro frightfully.

Janet watched him, and knew he was the head clerk, Jacob's confidential man. A few low words were exchanged between the sailors, and then, with dark faces, but brave hearts, they guided the boat over the breakers.

There was a suppressed, stifled cheer, which dropped into a "God bring you home again," from husky voices, with hats lifted; and then all eyes turned again to the point. There, half hid in the thick cloud of vapour, a grey object was seen, which, to Janet's eyes, looked very unlike a ship, but which the seamen pronounced to be the brig in which Jacob had sailed.

A low murmur passed through the crowd. She was certainly drifting ashore. At this, a heart-rending scream was heard. It came from a woman, who stood, with clasped hands, straining to see. She was the wife of the skipper.

The boat had by this time reached the end of the Quay, and was beginning to feel the wind and waves. Even as she looked, Janet lost sight of it: it rose again for a moment, but soon it must be engulfed in those mighty walls of water!

The crowd now moved on to the further point of the Quay, that they might keep the vessel more in sight, the cliff hiding it from them as it drifted in. But the wind at the

further point of the Quay, where there was no shelter whatever, was quite beyond Janet's power of bearing. She still clung on to the post, now straining to catch a glimpse of the boat, now watching the vessels and boats as they danced about in the harbour, or earnestly questioning the faces of the sturdy mariners. Their usually stolid, vacant features were now lit up with excitement. More than one of them looked in wonder at the slender figure beside them, her hair blown by the wind, and her usually pale face flushed and adding a fresh brilliancy to the dark eyes.

Now that the place was cleared, Janet saw Miss Russell. She was holding Mr. Mitchell; but it was evident she would prefer standing alone, if she could have done so. Very stern was the countenance, but Janet's heart beat kindly towards her. There was a sympathy between them at that moment that had never before existed, and the young girl longed for some outward expression of this feeling; but she only cast wistful glances of gentle appreciation on the unbending, stiff figure, whose very stillness told of grief and suppressed pain.

A man ran from the point, to tell Mr. Mitchell that the vessel was on the rocks: if some assistance was not at hand every soul on board must perish. It was known that there was no footing on these rocks, sharp and jagged as they were, as well as slippery from the seaweed.

"What of the boat?" was asked.

It was not to be seen when the man left the point. It had been nearly upset once, but, on the whole, had made wonderful way.

"It is not enough; there is not room in it," Miss Russell said.

"I doubt if another will be found to venture," Mr. Mitchell answered, in his phlegmatic manner.

"Offer reward."

"Oh yes, of course! You—Sam Brine! Of course, there will be a reward, you see. Try if another can be had out."

The man shook his head. It was certain destruction. No other boat but that one in the whole basin could have lived so long. The thing would be to send a party round by land to Sandy Point with ropes. Why had not this been thought of before?

Janet had drawn near the speakers. She never was quite sure if Miss Russell knew what she did; but she had drawn the girl's cold trembling hand on her own arm. To Janet it was a moment of wild excitement. This unlooked-for action, just at the moment her heart so yearned for human comfort; the still, dignified self-command of the sister filled her with admiration; the booming wind, the tumultuous roar of the elements, stimulated her ardent spirit. She only longed to handle an oar herself—to brave the danger, and save him. Him! There were a dozen human beings there; most of them with families—but Janet only then thought of one.

Meanwhile, she heard the people standing near, say that a party had already gone to Sandy Point. More than an hour ago a young gentleman, a stranger, had pointed it out as a good plan; and two or three well-known characters, such as Long Dick and Hardy Bill, had gone with him. How long would it take to reach the Point? "Why, in this wind, which knocks the breath out of a body, 'twould take two hours or better."

"And the ship was already on the rocks?"

"Yes, or all but; and she must go to pieces if she is fairly

on the 'Nose.' Nothing can save her; but, by good chance, she may have drifted in a little further east."

The boat was now pronounced to be out of sight. It was seen on the top of a huge monster, just as it got round the point. If it reached the brig some lives might be saved. It was a time of torturing suspense. They had not even the satisfaction of watching what was going on. The greater part of the crowd had set off to reach the cliffs. They had to go through part of the town—the low part where the shipping population lived—and then to skirt round the basin by a narrow path which led by the edge of the cliffs to the place called Sandy Point, from which a mass of rocks had fallen, and lay tumbled about in disorder, affording a danger in these high winds to homeward-bound crafts, and being a favourite place for a good walker to go and see how the waves can lash the shore. In the smoothest weather there was a perpetual contest with the tide and the rocks. Being beaten back, they threw up spouts of spray constantly; in such a gale as this, the waves dashing with such force through hollow depths produced a sound like the report of a gun, and between the breakers and the sharp reef a boat had very little chance.

"Nothing more can be done," said Miss Russell, presently. "Let us leave the matter to Providence and return home."

Janet was very unwilling to go back to the house, but obeyed. It seemed like yielding all hope, but Miss Russell evidently could stand no longer.

They found Anna in hysterics, having heard that the brig was broken to pieces and every one perished. Betty, wan and miserable, stood by her, bringing up every word of

what is supposed to be comfort on such occasions that she could think of.

Two hours had passed — three ! There was a decided lull, the wind's bluster subsiding into a wailing shriek, which rose and fell fitfully. The sky was clearer, and the clouds had gathered into a mass towards the east. The declining sun passed through a thin grey curtain, and lit up a wild scene ! The sea still raged and fretted over the pebbles, and all the promenades and usual resorts were deserted.

But in the town—that is, the part lying round the Quay and harbour—those narrow streets paved with small round stones, smelling of pitch, cordage, and fish—there were groups of eagerly-talking people standing about.

Women with babies and children, and men with their pipes, came to and fro from the Quay—speaking mostly in a hushed tone, feeling that every moment might bring news which would turn many a home into a house of mourning.

Janet watched alone. Miss Russell, at home, in her own chair, was again inaccessible.

Anna was on her bed, and Betty's conscience smiting her for work left undone, was trying her best to put everything "to rights," and assuring herself and Martha, that master would be preserved.

Janet's powers were strained as she watched for every sound, and meanwhile wondered who the stranger was who had led the party to the cliff. She, by force of immense self-command, forbade herself from dwelling on the fate of the brig. She resolutely turned off all thoughts from that, but in imagination followed the party gone to the cliff, and wondered how they would manage the ropes, &c. In the midst of all, she thought of Agnes Spencer, and wondered if she

and her brother had ventured out at all, and then recollected what a fine view of the sea they would have from their window.

But hark! there is a sound of footsteps—distant—but there is a distinct tread. It comes nearer. What is it? Is it life or death? Then for the first time almost rushed fully upon her all that it *might* be. She had not before realized it. In another moment they would be at the door. They?—Who?—And how? She fell on her knees—not for prayer—for not one thought or feeling could find its shape in words—but there was relief in the attitude—wringing her hands, her own loud throbbing pulses and breathing seemed to shut out other sounds, and she dreaded with intense dread what that sound might be.

But all was so still! Had the front door opened or not? That stillness could have but one meaning—good news would have spoken! Down, down went Hope, which hitherto had fluttered round her; and so wrought up and strained was she by anxious suspense and fasting, that for a moment or so she was insensible, and heard not the voices or the steps which were just outside her door.

The first thing she was quite conscious of was feeling a hand laid on her head, and that told all she much cared to know, for she knew that touch. The hideous fears which had gathered almost the strength of certainty vanished; but for one moment the reaction was suffocating.

"Is this the way my pupil welcomes a poor shipwrecked man?" said the familiar and welcome voice.

She drew his hand down and pressed it for a moment to her lips without turning, and then sprang up. A tattered sea-drenched figure stood before her. He looked thin and

pale, and one arm was tied in a handkerchief. It seemed strange to be shaking hands and exchanging common greetings, as they did presently.

He smiled rather sadly, as he said, "He must borrow some of Mr. Mitchell's clothes; at present he was enough to scare every one. "I should do well for a scarecrow in the cornfields—hey, sister?" laying his well hand on her shoulder.

"Pshaw, Jacob, don't talk nonsense, after what has happened," said she, in her old way.

"Come, Betty, instead of staring your eyes out, run and get some dry things for him.—So it was Mr. Spencer, was it, who thought of the plan?"

"Yes," said Jacob; "to him, I and all the poor fellows owe our lives. Never was there a more skilfully executed feat!" He spoke seriously enough now.

"It is odd, that Miss Rose's godson, whose picture you used to make yourself so silly about, should be ordained to save your life," said Miss Russell; "his mother and sisters we have known some time. This young man is only just come."

"How very interesting!" exclaimed Anna, who was looking unlike herself, having been still and quiet, while tears stood in her eyes at seeing her brother whom she had given up for lost; "'Tis like a story, Jacob! Oh, they are such charming people! and now we owe such a debt of gratitude."

Here Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell both came in. Hearty and overflowing she was in her greeting, and they both plied Jacob with more questions than he could well answer.

"How was it, hey? Who did it? Did you give yourself up?"

"Have mercy on him, and allow him to change his drip-

ping rags," said Miss Russell; "we will hear the particulars afterwards."

Jacob was not sorry to withdraw; and the tale was told quite as well by Hardy Bill, who had come with him to the house.

Meanwhile was heard between the gusts of wind the tolling bell. Two of the brave men who had sought to save their perishing brothers, themselves met death in the raging sea. Their bodies had been lifted up, and the bell was tolling as they were carried home. Jacob's first flush of pleasure had subsided into sadness. He sat apart near his sister, but rather behind, and allowed "Bill" to tell his tale uninterrupted. It was plain which way his thoughts ran, when he once said, in a low voice, "Dan Thorn had a wife and three children—he is taken—I am spared!"

And where was the *Wareham Trader*, that tight little brig which had been the pride of the harbour?

"Not a stick of her but 'ot's just fit for tinder, ma'am," Bill said; "'twas a cruel wonderful sight to see how them big waves dashed her agin the sharp rocks, and just smashed her all to bits. And all the cargo gone!"

The boat had reached Sandy Point just as the vessel was first dashed against the rock; the same powerful wave carried the boat in and turned it over. The crew could swim, all but Mr. Penn, the clerk. He clung to the boat till a rope was thrown to him; but it was supposed that Dan Thorn and the other dead man must have been struck on the head, as far as could be gathered amid the terror and confusion; no one saw them at all after the boat turned over. There was a time,—(how long no one knew) between that moment and the arrival of the land party with ropes,—when death seemed certain.

One stout swimmer had reached a footing on the rocks; but there was scarcely a possible way of climbing the high cliff, which rose almost perpendicular to a great height. Mr. Russell and Hardy Bill found themselves clinging to the same beam. In that fearful moment, amid the uproar, Mr. Russell had said to him, "If you are spared, tell my sisters to be kind to the widows and orphans, specially the one in the house."

Bill did not repeat this message to the ladies now, but when he spoke of it to his wife, he said he didn't rightly understand what the last part meant, but he was sure they were the words.

Just as Jacob had declared himself unable to hold on any longer, a loud halloo reached them from above. Who can describe what that sound was to the drowning men? But how was that help to be made available? In a few moments a man was carefully lowered by a rope. He managed to reach a ledge from which the cliff had been broken down, and the rough uneven descent enabled him, by dint of great activity and strength, to clamber down till he reached the reef or cluster of pointed rocks, over which the sea was breaking each moment. It was scarcely possible to find a footing for an instant, but it was the only hope, and towards this point the floating men swam, rallying their last strength, though not without difficulty and danger. For the tide was on the turn, and they were constantly carried back again with the receding wave just as they reached the rock; otherwise, the ebb was in their favour, and it was hailed with joy by the men on the cliff. In a short time the tide would leave the point so as to allow of their reaching a part of the cliff which they could manage to climb up.

Mr. Russell, whose strength rallied at the first burst of hope, had again given way, but he felt that his crew would be saved. He lost consciousness, and knew nothing till he found himself lying on a wet rock. Above him stood a handsome bright creature; a face, he said, he could never forget.

They told him that the crew were saved, and all the boatmen but two. They were then climbing up the cliff. One man who had been washed in, quite insensible, had been raised by the ropes, and was now recovered.

It was, as Jacob afterwards said with a shudder, a solemn and wonderful moment, when he found himself supported by that brave young man—saved from drowning, and those black fragments tossing to and fro on the waves, all that was left to tell of the little brig.

When the tale had been told, and Bill dismissed with hearty thanks, and more substantial tokens of gratitude, Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell were loud in their expressions of wonder and joy, mingled with pity for the loss of a valuable cargo.

When they touched on that, Jacob tried to change the conversation, and saying it was his turn to ask questions, he inquired for old acquaintances and friends.

Janet thought it was like a dream to see him standing there, himself, though looking sadly ill and careworn, but with such a look of peace and deep happiness expressed in every feature, as she had not seen since he left. It was strange, she thought, to be talking of common everyday things—strange to see Betty bring in the tea-things.

There was a buzz of many voices; for Anna was pressing the Mitchells to stay, and Mrs. Mitchell, while declaring she must hasten home to relieve her girls' anxiety, prescribed bed

and baths, and all kinds of remedies for "Cousin Jacob's pale face and bruised arm."

Janet stood by the window. Evening's shade was over everything, and a thread-like crescent of a new moon, with one pale star, was visible among the still restless clouds. The storm had passed, but the sea looked sullen yet, and chafed as if wanting more prey. She was picturing to herself the scene at Sandy Point—the broken ship, the despairing clinging men, and the brave young hero who had saved so many lives. This was Agnes' brother! of whom she had heard so much. How proud Agnes must be of him! How nice it must be to have a brother! And then she went back to little Tom. Tears were in her eyes as she remembered that time and the kind face that had brought so much comfort to her then.

A hand was felt on her shoulder, and looking up there was the same face.

"I thought a few hours ago that I should never see you again," he said. "By the way, you were nearly wrecked once, I remember. Do you recollect anything of it?"

"Yes; the being awakened out of sound sleep by a confusion of noises, and hearing *her* scream. The captain told us to prepare, and to dress ourselves. I dressed Tom. I remember the sea dashing in through the window or port-hole on us, and a great loud crash overhead, which was the breaking of the mast. But we were not allowed to go on deck. I don't think I understood what the danger was; but I was glad to get on shore I know!"

They were silent for a few moments. There was some little bustle in the room about sundry domestic arrangements, so that they were left undisturbed in the window. His hand

still lay on her shoulder. Presently she looked up at him and said—

"Did you really think of me at that hour?"

He smiled.

"You have not altered, I see. The same doubting mind."

Janet blushed deeply, and cast down her eyes at this.

"I did think of the little maiden whom Providence sent to cheer us in our declining years." After a pause he said—"What do you find new or altered in my face, Janet, that you gaze so hard at me?"

She laughed a little.

"I had fancied you much older than you are. You are so fond of making yourself out an old man!"

"Am I? Well, I am not very young. How do the studies go on? Anna said something just now about your working hard."

"Yes, pretty hard; and I have something to ask you—a favour, Mr. Russell. It is time for me to do something for myself. I want to be a governess!"

"A governess? Bless the child!"

"You forget I am no longer a child," she said, with a slight assertion of dignity in her tone. "There are governesses as young as I am."

"Pooh, pooh, Janet; never name it again. What is your reason?"

She hung her head as she hesitatingly said, "Miss Russell talks of expense, and—"

"Never mind; it is a habit of my sister's. I assure you we are very well off; and don't trouble your little head about money; you will hurt me much, Janet, if you ever allude to such a thing again. Remember that I look upon you as

entirely one of the family—a younger sister, or niece, or whatever relationship you prefer. A pretty greeting, indeed! A governess truly! I give you up to none but your own father. By-the-way, have you heard of him?"

Janet's "no" was very low and tremulous. Her heart beat quickly at his tone of kind affection. She could not tell him of all the daily trials which had spurred her on to wish to leave.

Just now she felt she should not like to go. Now that he was at home again, things might be very different.

She retired to her room and bed that night with a happier mind than she often felt, and from her heart echoed Betty's words, that "Nobody didn't know how much they missed the 'Master' till they'd a got un back again."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE HERO.

Strange was the mixture of occupation, and different feelings called up, for the first few days of Mr. Russell's return.

Hearty congratulations from friends were followed by care and condolence for the bereaved relations of the drowned men. He turned from his earnest thanks to the Spencer family, to anxious plans for supplying, in a pecuniary way, the loss of fathers and sons. Penn's illness which followed the event left much heavy work in the office also, and letters had to be written immediately to the agent in Spain.

All was laid aside one fine afternoon; the sea and sky looked calm and blue; the ships in the harbour had their colours half high, and with grave, sorrow-stricken faces strings of sailors gathered together and formed into line.

Jacob, with many of the Wareham gentlemen, was there, and as the procession mounted the hill, the tolling bell of the old church was heard. There was as yet no burying-ground attached to the chapel. The very brightness of the day seemed to add sadness to the scene; and, as might be expected, an immense crowd followed the two coffins—too many to find room within the small church. But when the

bodies were brought out to be laid in the earth, they were gathered in a reverent, silent circle round the grave—every hat held up, and every one earnestly following the minister's voice.

It was one of those still summer evenings when nothing but the buzz of insects is heard. It was the custom at Wareham to sing a Psalm over the grave, and as the voices were in well-trained harmony, for Mr. Grant took careful pains with his church singing, not many eyes were dry.

Jacob remained with his old friends at the Rectory till late that evening. There was much to hear and to tell.

In the course of the conversation mention was made of Janet, and Mrs. Grant was enthusiastic in her praises of the classic beauty of her features, and the style altogether. "You must find her much changed, I should think, Mr. Russell?"

Jacob smiled as he owned he had not observed any change. He thought her looking stronger and better, certainly, and now he remembered she was certainly grown a good deal, but he had not particularly noticed her "style"—or that she was such a beauty. He had always found her's a peculiarly attractive face, and so he did now. He owned that he might live months with a person and not find out what was the colour of his or her eyes. He knew what pleased him or not, but he never thought of defining it, or searching for the cause.

Mrs. Grant laughed, and said she hoped Janet would not be spoiled, but she constantly heard remarks made about her. She added that she was glad to hear she had made such good friends in the Spencers. This led to Mr. Spencer, and by the time his deed of chivalry had been duly discussed, it was time to take leave.

Even after the first excitement of his return had passed, Jacob did not altogether fall back to those retired and regular habits which had become natural to him for some years.

The first evening on which the two families met he was very silent, relapsing, Janet was afraid, into his old habit, which the excitement and pleasure of coming home, and the danger which had accompanied it, seemed at first to break.

He sat a little—very little—apart from the rest, and with a book open by way of excuse, he was in reality taken up in watching the two girls, Agnes and Janet, as they chatted together. Now and then the latter glancing towards him, she found his thoughtful gaze bent on them, and quickly following the direction of his eyes, she turned to Agnes, and acknowledging all the prettiness and charm of her appearance, wondered not that he should be struck by it.

During the walk home that evening Mr. Russell remarked in an abrupt way to Janet, "Do you remember Miss Rose's picture of the girl with the golden hair, Janet?"

"Yes, it was Agnes and her brother."

"Of course, and how like it is to her even now!"

"The original seems to strike you as much as the drawing did, I remember."

"Fully. She is indeed a lovely young creature, and a nice friend for you. What is she like?—in character and taste?" he added.

"I can scarcely describe her, I know so few girls to compare her with. But you will find out for yourself."

Whereupon he fell into a musing fit, and was silent till they reached No. 1.

From this time the intimacy progressed rapidly, and there was a constant interchange of visits. Mr. Russell was visibly

excited by it, into greater sociability and animation, particularly by Agnes Spencer, who made a point of "drawing him out," as she called it.

He liked to see her rising colour and pretty proud smile, when he alluded to her brother. That was a subject of which she never was tired, and it was kept up all the more, from the fact of the "hero" having disappeared from the scene on the day after the storm. There had been no time even to thank him. He had been summoned to a friend's sick-bed—"very provoking," as Agnes said, "just as he had come from such a long tour;" and she feared he would make excuses for remaining away, as he seemed to have taken no fancy to Wareham, for the few days he had seen it; and, to his mother's vexation, he called it a slow, tea-drinking, gossip-loving town, with vile roads, and nothing but ugly old maids and an affected parson in the way of society.

Janet wished very much he would return. Her expectations were raised to a high pitch by Mr. Russell's description of him.

She, whose acquaintance with gentlemen was hitherto limited to old and young Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Grant, Dr. Deane, Mr. Lewis, and a Mr. Morris, a solicitor, said to be very clever, who wore gold spectacles and bit his nails in church, naturally thought Mr. George Spencer must be a wonderful person. It was with a mixture of fear and awe, and with great expectation of admiration that she looked forward to seeing him. If anything could lessen this feeling on her part, it was the fuss that Anna and some others made about him. Sometimes, out of mere opposition to this "clatter" of praise, she determined not to admire him at all, and was quite sure he was "nothing after all"—but, when again

alone, she remembered that day, and his quiet, unobtrusive bravery. Besides, he went out of the way of all the fuss—very likely on purpose! Yes, Janet began to believe the story of the sick friend was only an excuse; and it added to her prepossession in his favour very considerably, that he should thus have retired from thanks and being made a "fuss with."

The high tide was dancing up the pebbles with a ringing plash, as if there was no such thing as a storm; the sky was clear and blue, and all the lodging-houses poured forth their inhabitants to enjoy the refreshing breeze. Gay people walked up and down the parade or sought the benches, wan invalids passed in Bath-chairs, and a few real lovers of the sea stood on the pebbles close to the foamy zigzag line, or sat on the low rocks under the cliffs.

Wareham was in full beauty, clothed with dark-leaved myrtles, and bright with gaily-tinted flowers—almost every house had at least its plot. The tall, brick house in Queen's Terrace alone disdaining such appendage, frowned away as ever, though full in its sight the sun-bathed cliff and waters displayed their beauties. Occasionally, too, the breeze brought a few notes from the band to the old study window—a few tantalising, delicious notes, which thrilled through Janet's heart. She pushed aside the dictionary and grammar which lay before her, impatiently. Carriages rolled on, and voices in gay, careless conversation passed the window, and the point of the dark red cliff looked so stately, rearing its rounded head against the soft pearly sky.

Another burst of music!

Janet leant her head down on the table, sighed, and felt desolate—solitary—out of harmony with the evening.

Presently a light, quick knock was heard. Janet started, and twisted back her hair, which had fallen over her face.

"Not at home, Janet?" said a clear-toned youthful voice. "There you are again, up to your chin in dusty, fusty, musty, crabbed old books—pale and tired. But come—come with me. It is such an evening—every fish has crept out of its shell. Come, Janet! Yes, it is true! Even the limpets are winking one eye and shaking one leg. But have they any fins, or legs, or eyes?" and she laughed gaily.

"May I go, I wonder?" said Janet, brightening up as she looked at the pretty face before her. "Perhaps I may be wanted, Agnes."

"No, no! Eleanor is in the parlour, and has engaged Miss Anna Russell to go with her 'tract-sowing,' as I call it. They said I might coax you to go out, and they said—but never mind now. You have a headache, I see. Obstinate, foolish Janet, to overdo it so—and all for what?"

"For what, indeed! To get away from this place," said Janet, rising quickly.

"Oh, for shame, Janet! Wish to leave Miss Anna and dear Mr. Lewis? Oh, fie!" and Agnes laughed again merrily —so merrily that Janet joined too. "That's right, my dear, chase away melancholy. What is the old song?" and she sang, while handing Janet her bonnet, breaking off, however, to say—"Come, put it straight, please. Really, you do want a new shawl."

"Don't talk of it!" said Janet. "I wonder, Agnes, you can bear to be seen with me!"

"So do I—you are such a horrid girl! It is a proof of my amiability, or of yours. But as Miss Mitchell says, 'Outward appearance is often deceptive,' hey, Janet?"

"Oh, I have had such a storm there, Agnes!"

"Tell me all about it when we are out, dear. I am pining for that sweet breeze. Stay, Janet—for pity's sake put your bonnet straighter."

"You are very anxious about my dress this evening, Agnes. Will this do?"

"Yes—but you are sadly pale. But, come, let us away, or we shall be interrupted, and I have something to tell you."

They passed the company on the parade, and reached the cliff-walk.

Here the breeze blew in their faces, and the spray dashed up; while the plash and gurgle of the full tide under the hollow rocks mingled pleasantly with the band music. They were playing a march, spirit-moving and wild.

Agnes danced on a few steps, then gathering a wreath of the pink convolvulus, she threw it at Janet playfully, and as she smiled, and the light glanced on her golden ringlets, Janet gazed at her with unrestrained admiration and wonder.

The two girl friends were unlike. Agnes all grace and style, her lips full of curl, her cheeks full of colour, her hair so very bright—she looked like a sunbeam. If Janet smiled, which she did beautifully, it was followed by a sigh; and if she talked gaily one moment, the next she was grave. Her coarse straw bonnet and cotton dress too, contrasted strongly with Agnes' perfectly well-chosen and fashionable attire.

"Agnes," said Janet, speaking slowly and looking steadfastly at her, "You are so suited to this evening! You seem—face, figure, voice and all—to chime in so beautifully; and with your pretty floating dress it does not need much fancy to believe you have risen out of that glittering wave!"

"Thank you, dear; but I can't stay to bandy pretty compliments. I'm not an Aphrodite or a mermaid. I see a charming little hollow, so soft and so snug, half way down. Can't we reach it? Let us try. Only pray don't slip!"

So half in fear, half in fun, with cautious steps they crept down over the crumbling edge, and by dint of catching hold of tufts of plants, they managed to reach the desired "nest."

"Beautiful!" exclaimed Agnes. "Oh, I love the sea, and those charming boats bowing so coyly! I wish I was in one! I love the sea, Janet; don't you?"

"No, no!" said Janet, turning away her head. "It is associated with the greatest pleasure and the greatest misery I ever had. I don't love it. Certainly not now when it looks so glad."

"You strange girl!" said Agnes, gently.

"Oh, Agnes, I don't think I shall ever like it again! I can never enjoy it as you do."

"Never! Oh, yes, Janet; don't say that. Just now you are jaded, worried, set on edge — but, never? You are so young. You may be very happy yet—as happy as I am."

"Who would think this the same sea as that of ten days ago, when the tossing foam covered even the hills, and the wind buffeted houses, ships, and mankind? I liked that storm, Agnes. It was grand! There is something sublime in wind like that. I don't know how it was, but that day I threw off troubles, and thought of bright things—and then his, Mr. Russell's, return at first, made everything different. I gave up the thought of leaving for a few days, but now—

now—it is even worse than ever. They might leave me to enjoy his society, I think."

"What do they do to prevent it, dear?"

"Do! Why not exactly *do* anything; but hint and frown and look daggers, and if you believe it, they say now that I am grown up and I am too old to be so much with him. I assure you I dare not look at him in their presence! And it makes me so stiff and conscious that I believe he fancies I am sulky. No, Agnes, I can't stand it."

"I am glad I know you, Janet," said Agnes, with a graver face than she generally wore.

"And I am sure I am thankful that I know you," returned Janet, with tears in her eyes.

"But as to your being a governess," interrupted her friend, "I don't believe it. I can't bear the notion. You are not suited to the life. By-the-way, Janet, how does your pupil get on, hey?"

"Don't ask me! Oh, Agnes! there was such a row about that. You know that insufferable puppy, man or boy, or whatever he is?"

"Surely you cannot mean Mr. Edward Mitchell? Surely, Janet, you are not calling my partner a puppy? My dear, he called me a star, a flower!—and I forget what—I can't remember half his compliments! And then to hear him called a puppy! 'Tis too bad, Janet!"

"Oh! I do so dislike him," said Janet, with a sigh. "I had rather be condemned to hear Bridget's long stories for an hour, than bear his insulting familiarity. But it is all very well for you, he would not be so to you; but to me—"

"He told me, I recollect," interrupted Agnes, "that you were a great favourite of his; that he always admired you,

though it was the fashion to say you were too small, and proud, and rather full of airs."

"Don't tell me what he said. I really don't care; but I am annoyed. I told Bridget I would not practise if there was so much joking and teasing, and I could not play if that abominable flute went on in my ear, out of tune and time; and then Mary Jane said that I *must go on*, for Miss Anna had *ordered* me to teach them. My pride rose, and I put on my bonnet and walked away, and then,—then, I had all the old story. I was reminded of what I am, and—oh! it is dreadful!"

"What did Mr. Russell say, Janet?"

"Oh! he never says anything; but he looked hurt. However, it only makes me the more anxious to leave it all!"

Agnes looked grave, but presently said—"If you had but got a brother, Janet!"

"I had once."

"Then you know something of the pleasure. My brother came yesterday. Mamma and all of us are so happy. He is nearer my age, you know, than Eleanor, and more like me. We are such good friends."

"It must be very happy for you, Agnes! Do you know I have often envied even the Mitchells. They seem happy together. It seems like a home!" Janet sighed.

"Yes, good-natured, not very refined, Mrs. Mitchell, so quick, and so brisk, and her long sawny husband, and the three olive branches—they do seem fond of each other, as you say. Bridget pokes out her chin, and makes prosy good speeches, and Mary Jane surveys her new dress with complacency, and Edward says, 'sisters are great bores,' buzzing

in one's ear like a large bluebottle fly. But come, what would poor dear mamma say to me for such scandal! She is at this moment driving with Mrs. Mitchell, and Mr. Mitchell sent me such a bouquet for the dance last week. How wrong it is of me! Come, Janet, get up, I see Mr. Russell coming; he doesn't see us. What a sober business-like walk he has, to be sure!"

Janet rose and saw Mr. Jacob coming down the hill.

"Yes," she said, "he always walks here of an evening. See, he is looking down on his favourite view. How well I remember my first walk here with him! I have good cause to remember it, too."

"He shall turn again with us; we'll go home by the lane," said Agnes.

"He is going home now, I am sure, Agnes. We must not disturb him."

"Oh, but I shall make him turn—see if I don't."

So saying, to Janet's great wonder and perhaps envy at her self-confidence, she ran on, and in a pretty, playful manner asked him to go round by the lane with them.

He looked pleased and surprised, and turned immediately. He and Agnes walked first, Janet lingered a little behind—she was tired. Presently Agnes said—"You had better help her, she is fagged," and then he turned, and drawing Janet's hand on his arm, he said—"If it is too far for you, my dear, we won't go."

"Oh, no!" Janet said, she should like it.

They rested on the top of the hill before they climbed the low stile which led into the lane. There was a glimpse of Old Wareham tower and its elms on the opposite hill, and below lay New Wareham, and the new brick chapel was very

conspicuous. This led to a discussion on the merits of the two buildings, and Agnes laughingly accused Mr. Russell of never attending the chapel. He said that he had always attended the old church from a boy, and his father and grandfather before him, and although he was glad for the accommodation of the public and bad walkers, that a church should be built at New Wareham, yet he had never liked to give up his old habit. Both his parents lay in the churchyard, and he liked passing them on a Sunday.

Janet's eyes filled with tears, and blushing up, she said—"I have often longed to beg a great favour of you, Mr. Russell. Would you let me go with you there one Sunday? Do you think I might? I have never been there since—since I first came to the place." She cleared her voice, and added—"I should so like to see the churchyard again."

"True, to be sure you would. I ought to have considered that. Certainly you shall come."

"Will your sisters allow me, do you think?"

"Ah, we must manage that! You shall go, Janet, that is if you think you can manage the hill, the first fine Sunday. How very odd that I should never have thought of this!"

Agnes had jumped over the stile, and was gathering a bunch of honeysuckles while this passed, and now the others followed her. It was a true Devonshire lane, narrow, and with high hedges. There was no view to be seen; but a person must be hard to please who cannot be satisfied with a genuine old Devonshire hedge, with its shadows and its mossy bank, where, from the feathery ferns and the fragrant woodbine to the rich tufts of pale primroses and star-like periwinkle and superb foxglove, every blade, and every leaf, and every break in the earth, is in itself a study. A small,

bubbling brook, which in winter often covered the road, was now quietly running by the hedge-side. They stood for a moment to watch a dragon-fly, and then Jacob, looking at his watch, said he was very sorry, but he really must not linger, they had some way to go now, and he had an appointment. They quickened their pace, but Janet was very tired, and do what she would she kept rather behindhand.

"It is too far for you," said Jacob; "I was wrong to allow it. Take care, there is a carriage coming, and we haven't too much room." He pulled Janet a little back as he spoke, and a phaeton and pair came close upon them.

"It is mamma!" cried Agnes. "Stop, stop, can't Janet—hadn't she better get on the box with George? That's my brother George. You won't mind it, will you?" she said, quickly.

Meanwhile the carriage had stopped. Mrs. Mitchell and Mrs. Spencer had been talking too earnestly to see them at first, but George Spencer recognised his sister.

"How do you do, Mr. Russell? How do you do, Miss Nairn? I am glad to see you in such pleasant company, my love," said Mrs. Spencer.

Mrs. Mitchell nodded quickly at them, and Agnes stepping forward asked if Janet might have a lift.

"Oh! by all means, surely my love; but she won't mind sitting in front, I hope—hey? Will you, Miss Nairn? Dear, how tired you look! Stop, George, my dear, mind the horses, Miss Nairn will excuse you, I am sure."

"Better get in, Janet," said Jacob.

"Oh, no, I had rather not. I had much rather not. I am not much tired," said she, drawing back.

"I insist," said Agnes. "Mr. Russell, you must use force. Exercise your authority. Come, George, keep the horses still."

Janet was forced to get up, and the horses, tossing their heads at the flies, put Mrs. Spencer in such a flurry she could only kiss her hand to Mr. Russell and try to smile, and then begged George to be steady, for the road was so bad.

"Fie, fie, Cousin Jacob," called out Mrs. Mitchell, nodding and shaking her hand, and still keeping her head turned to them. "Good bye—good bye." Then laughing and twitching on her shawl—"Upon my word, Mr. Russell is coming out. I must tell Edward, he will be so jealous!"

Mrs. Spencer got up a languid smile, but she felt desperately uneasy, for the horses, impatient of the interruption, had not fallen into their proper pace, and one was taking a few steps in a canter by way of variation.

"My dear George, let me get out! What is it?"

"Nothing, mother, nothing! Why you really treat me like a school-boy. Can't you trust me?"

Mrs. Spencer laughed faintly. "No, my dear, I know how steady you are; he is, I assure you, Mrs. Mitchell; you needn't be afraid of him; he is reckoned a good whip—but take care, George, of that stone—but you know you don't know these horses, and I'm never a bit afraid of Nichols—not the least."

"What an unnatural mother you are, to prefer Nichols to your son," said George.

"My dear, I didn't say so; but I beg your pardon, Miss Nairn,—I believe you don't know my son; allow me to introduce him now. Mr. George Spencer—Miss ——. My dear, mind the turning!"

"Fortunately I have been introduced to you before," said George, bending a little from his high seat towards Janet. "My mother is too nervous in a carriage to be quite conscious what she is doing; but my sister Agnes has written and said so much about Miss Nairn, I could not doubt who it was."

Janet did not know exactly what to answer, so she said nothing. To be so suddenly and familiarly introduced to this hero of her imagination, about whom she had speculated and thought for ten days, rather upset her usual presence of mind. She felt decidedly uncomfortable, and wished heartily she had first met him, as she had fancied she should, in the drawing-room at Rock Cottage, or the sitting-room at No. 1, where, unobserved in the crowd, she might take a long look. As it was she tried to catch stolen glances; but each time her eyes met his, and the sparkle of fun and mischief in them, though they were decidedly handsome, frightened and also a little disappointed her. This was not her notion of him at all. She had imagined a thoughtful, silent person, with even a touch of sternness about him.

The living man on the driving-seat, however, was the reverse of this. Bright, gay and youthful he seemed. "Almost a boy," was Janet's thought. But there was no time for more consideration. She found herself called upon at least to listen.

"Are you comparing notes, Miss Nairn?"

"What?"

"Are you comparing George Spencer the real, with the George Spencer you have heard that silly sister of mine describe? When two persons have heard much of one another, as I believe you and I have, there is always a

strangeness in first meeting, don't you think? I should like to know how far I resemble anything you have been good enough to imagine me."

"How do you know I have imagined anything?" Janet asked, rather startled at his reading her thoughts, but determined not to be so afraid of a "boy," and with a demure smile, which he managed to see, by stooping to straighten the reins.

"Well, without any extra conceit, I suppose so, judging from my sister Aggy's usual facility in talking. Come now,—did she tell tales of me? Or did she expatiate on the numberless perfections of her hopeful brother? She can do both, I know."

"Perhaps I did not take her opinion. I have heard of you from others—from another.". . .

"Indeed!"

"Yes, Mr. Russell told me of you." Her voice involuntarily changed into earnestness as she said this.

"Oh, when I had the pleasure of fishing him out of the sea! Poor fellow, it was nearly up with him! He seems a worthy man. I couldn't have had a better introduction, apparently, for every one looks on me as a public benefactor about here."

This jarred on Janet; "Fishing up" was very different from her idea of the event. Though rather indignant, she said, in her most earnest way, "How happy you must have felt! What a grand thing it must be to save a person from death at the risk of one's own life!"

Again he managed to look at her, not quite understanding the low, hesitating, yet eager tone.

Janet met his look this time unconsciously; she was now

completely wrapt in her subject. Her eyes flashed, and a pale, delicate colour just tinted her cheeks, so that her auditor was surprised at her extreme beauty.

He only answered her by a laugh—one of those thoroughly unmeaning, conventional noises which is as unlike a genial laugh as possible, but is used as a convenient stop-gap when people don't know what to say.

The sound checked Janet at once. She coloured more deeply, as she felt uncomfortable at having said what was not understood. Disappointed and vexed, she looked steadily at the wheel on her side, biting her lips, and resolving to be careful what she said to him another time, for he was evidently a very common-place person.

Presently he spoke, in a graver tone: "There was an excitement about the whole scene that day—the crowds of anxious faces—the return of the ship, to perish in sight of home—the very wind, the uproar and tumult, excited one to the utmost pitch. It needed but one second's thought to see that help from the cliff was the needful thing. I did but speak, and the brave fellows were ready. As you say, Miss Nairn, it was a glorious moment when I drew him on shore—I am proud of it; but you don't blame me, I hope, for disliking the fuss and notoriety that old ladies are prone to make? 'Tis such an extreme bore to receive thanks, and wear the subject threadbare."

"Indeed, I think so; it must be horrible," said Janet, heartily, and feeling a rapid reaction in his favour. "That was why you left directly, wasn't it?" Again she looked at him, as if to read his thoughts, with the same kindling eye and colour.

He smiled. "No. I might deceive you, and say 'Yes;'

but I am sorry to say—sorry, since I see it will lower me in your opinion—that my excuse was a very real one."

"Oh, of course! I didn't mean—"

She stopped in confusion again, and did not speak for a long time. But George Spencer could talk pleasantly, and he had plenty to say; so by degrees Janet's awkwardness gave way, and she listened with pleasure and ease to his remarks on the scenery before them, or his recollections of foreign travel. He paused suddenly to hear what his mother was saying.

"If Miss Nairn has no objection, Mrs. Mitchell and I wish to see if the Tuckers are returned; so you can drive round by Osborne Terrace, you know."

"Yes, mother. I am as wise as ever; but perhaps you can direct me"—stooping towards Janet. "I hope you don't find it cold? It is a pity to go home. Shall I lengthen the drive?"

Mrs. Spencer caught the word "cold." She had a dread of cold. "My dear Miss Nairn, how inattentive I am! Pray take this cloak—you must, indeed! The sea-breeze is chilly. Pray come and sit here: we can make room, can't we, Mrs. Mitchell?"

"There is no chill breeze here, mother," said George. "It is bad for the horses to have all the weight behind, particularly such a heavy addition as that would be," he added to Janet; then, whipping the horses, they trotted on briskly —too fast for talking.

Janet looked from the new, well-fitting kid gloves on Mr. Spencer's hands to her own thread ones, and a flush covered her face. She felt as if out of place beside him, with Mrs. Spencer's silk and fur cloak over her feet.

The horses moved fast. George was trying their speed on the only level ground which he had met with. But Janet's thoughts went faster still: they flew back to Manchester; then far away over the broad ocean, where her father was—if he were yet alive, but not one word had she heard of him.

* * * * * *

"Agnes," said Mr. Spencer to his sister that night, "your friend is romantic, isn't she?"

"What do you mean, sir?" (pulling his whiskers,) "You dare not tell me you don't think her beautiful, or that I have flattered in my portrait. Isn't she like that picture you used to admire so at Broom Hall? Confess, sir!—confess I was right!"

"She wears horrid bad gloves," was the answer, with a provoking smile, as he tossed his handsome head back, and threw his arm round his sister's waist. "But I suppose that is part and parcel of the romance, isn't it? Is she dependent on that—?"

"That delightful man, Mr. Russell, whom you saved?—Yes, she is. But I shall tell you no more while you have that mocking smile; you don't deserve it."

"Jacob! Ha! ha! Oh, what's in a name, Aggie! And she is called—let me see, what is it?—Annette? Well, to be serious, she hasn't a bad figure; rather dignified for such a mite, and graceful—rather. Altogether I approve your taste. Come, now, and reward me with a waltz."

"Oh, George, you should hear her play!"

"Well, I am ready. Really, it will be good fun, and something new, to cultivate the acquaintance of these people. You must bring them here. Eleanor approves, doesn't she? But

defend me from Eleanor's particular friends! What a dull, slow place it is, to be sure!" And he yawned over a newspaper, till the waltz induced him to whistle an accompaniment.

George Spencer was an only son, comfortably provided for, so that no profession had been judged needful for him; he was also heir-apparent to a wealthy uncle. He was naturally amiable and easy-tempered, had plenty of ready observation and sense at command, and a handsome person, though perhaps somewhat under-sized. If he was just a little spoilt, and thought George Spencer a very agreeable and irresistible fellow, it was no more than most other persons thought and said, and what his mother and sister Agnes told him by word or look all day long. He was essentially good-natured, and did not like to give pain to any one; so that while his whims and caprices were the rule of the family, only objected to occasionally by his elder sister Eleanor, he never imagined he was the least selfish, and led a very easy and self-contented life, rather apt to fancy himself in love, and, by way of contradiction, choosing for that purpose young ladies whom he could not be supposed to think of marrying, being, in fact, rather sated and weary of the court paid to him, as so young a "marrying man," by mothers and daughters. He rather liked to "shock the public," as he said, by choosing out some plain, and even vulgar girl, as his chief partner for an evening. This way of proceeding had brought him very near one or two awkward scrapes, and alarmed his mother. It was her great wish that he should be "serious," and marry at once. She was just a little tired of constantly breaking up her establishment, and flitting about from place to place, as his fancy led. Unfortunately, there was no house on the family

estate ; it had always been settled that George was to build one. But though he had portfolios full of drawings and plans, he never came to the point of laying the first stone, and declared he could not retire to fill the "awfully dull and respectable part of country gentleman till he was married."

"Then do marry," was his mother's answer.

"Oh, yes, all in good time—when I find the right Mrs. George! But let me enjoy my youth and liberty a little. After all, marriage is a deuced dull affair after the first year."

But a few wise friends deeply regretted this idle "enjoyment of liberty," and mourned to see, as they thought, a promising character deteriorate, without the healthy and saving necessity of work of any kind. George himself, to do him justice, saw and felt the truth of this, and had some moments of penitence and resolutions to break it; but "something" always happened to postpone the time for "settling down and making himself of some use in the world." A mere butterfly he was at this period—boyish, gay, and, as he called it, "bored to death" by turns—his natural taste keeping him apart from all vice or "fast" living; and, because he was domestic, and preferred lolling in easy-chair or sofa, with some light reading, to smoking and gambling, his mother and sister were proud and happy, and thought "George" would certainly make the "best husband in the world."

CHAPTER XVII.

MISS RUSSELL'S MEMORY, AND MRS. MITCHELL'S PROPOSAL.

Miss Russell was far from well. Her increasing weak sight prevented her from employing herself, so that there was little to withdraw her mind from the loss of the cargo and the brig. It was in vain that her brother told her the loss would not affect their yearly income—that he had been long saving, and this would not ruin them at all. She hugged the idea with tenacity; it was a text for many lectures every day to every member of the family. At every meal she spoke of the necessity for stringent economy, and worked herself into a fever if a penny was owing to any shop.

Anna cared not. She had a rooted disbelief of ruin, and knew little at all of money-matters, believing, as a matter of course, that there would always be enough for her wants. When Miss Russell was irritable and fretful, she avoided her. Not that Miss Russell ever found much fault with Anna, for she had always been a pet in the family. It was only on the subject of education that she invariably opposed Anna.

It was otherwise with Jacob. Miss Russell never forgot that once, long ago, he had been very unbusiness-like—that

when quite a boy, Spenser's "Faery Queene" had been found under the ledger by his father, who had said, "Depend on it, Jacob will never be a man of business—never." She could not forget these traits of his early youth. If he was at all gayer than usual—if he talked of a book, or played on his violin—she suspected mischief. He was the youngest of the family, and the mother having been for years an invalid, Miss Russell had, in very early youth, been promoted to be mistress of the house, and, as it has been already said, her energy and perseverance had gone far towards saving the family from ruin.

All this had served to give a turn to her character. Strangers did not know, friends forgot, but Jacob never overlooked it. When she found fault, he remembered his old follies; when she fretted about economy and saving, he called to mind, her self-denying, useful life in youth. The remembrance of her devotion as a daughter and elder sister made him forbearing and patient, when she worried every one else. It made him give up everything that annoyed her. Janet thought too much so, and that it only increased the evil; but she understood and reverenced the temper which was so widely different from her own; and she thought if Miss Russell had been her own relation, or had shown any love towards her, she, too, would have striven to soften the edges of a rough and worn temper. As it was, she liked her far better than Anna. Miss Russell's severity and love of contradiction, galling as it was, did not try her so much as the overpowering volubility, the worrying interference, the unsympathising animation of Anna.

It was a peculiar feature in Miss Russell's character not to forget. As Jacob's fiddling propensities were fresh as ever in

her mind, so were Janet's first early bursts of temper ; and she was fond of reminding her of them, which to Janet's pride was almost unbearable.

Often now, Janet sought for opportunities to make herself useful—to fetch and carry for Miss Russell, or to work for her ; but she always tried to do this unseen. She placed Miss Russell's chair and basket of paper before she came into the room, to avoid the irritating remark—"Ah, I am glad to see you come round. I always said pride must stoop. *Now* you see the truth of what I said!" &c.

When Miss Russell had nothing else to be anxious and cross about, Janet was her safety valve ; she would deplore her own folly and weakness in ever giving way to Jacob's visions or Anna's impetuosity, and sigh over the expense and the trial. But if ever Anna, or Jacob, or any one else proposed Janet's going to a good school as parlour boarder, to prepare her to gain her livelihood as teacher—or even that they should take steps to place her in some family as nursery governess—then Miss Russell objected: said she was too young, too unhealthy, too quick-tempered. It was all very well with them—they understood her—it would never do as a governess. Oh no! she must stay on of course ; and, indeed, she was getting to be useful. Of course, when she died, and when Anna married—which Miss Russell always believed would be the case—of course, then, Janet must be a governess, or something or other. . . .

On the other hand, if Jacob talked of her remaining on with them, and of the propriety of beginning to lay by a small provision for her, or of giving her now an allowance of her own—if he so much as hinted at this, Miss Russell asked what he was thinking of! why he did not look out for a

situation for her, or try to get at her father's connexions in Manchester! . . .

But, perhaps, one of Miss Russell's greatest stumbling-blocks was her lively, determinedly good-tempered cousin, Mrs. Mitchell, who often left her domestic concerns to "cheer up Miss Russell, poor soul!"

"Cheer up!" Why, every laugh, every contented nod, each happy word of Mrs. Mitchell's made Miss Russell more gloomy, more severe, more contradictory; and yet, strange to say, she missed Mrs. Mitchell's visits, and wondered much if two or three days passed without seeing her.

"I am sure you will be glad to hear what I have to say to-day, cousin," cried Mrs. Mitchell one morning, in her most cheerful and loudest voice. "I just put on my bonnet any way, and said I must run over, though we were very busy. But Mrs. Turner—you know who I mean? Well, Mrs. Turner told me she wanted to hear of a nursery governess for her three children—two girls and a boy, or two boys and one girl, I really don't know which. So I immediately thought of Janet—Jane, I mean. I said to Mitchell, I was sure you would rejoice; and it certainly is time to begin if ever she does. You will spoil her here, for work. The Spencers are enough to spoil any one, and so I tell my girls and my boy. I said it was owing to Agnes' spoiling, that Janet was so touchy about practising with my Bridget." . . .

"Really I think, Mrs. Mitchell, that you must allow Edward was to blame there."

"Oh, I dare say! No doubt my children have faults as well as others; but"—and she touched Miss Russell's hand, who, however, drew it away; "but, never mind that, 'tis all forgot and forgiven; and I am sure I am glad

to be able to help you, and the girl too, to Mrs. Turner's situation."

"You needn't trouble yourself! Jane is not going to leave us at present. And if she were, I think I could settle it. Mrs. Turner might apply to me!"

"Certainly! Oh, certainly!" said Mrs. Mitchell, jogging her foot. "Well, do as you like; but, if you change your mind, I shall be ready to do what I can: and Jane looks so much better in health, I should think she needn't be a burden on you any longer."

"It is quite a voluntary act," said Miss Russell, drawing up her head; "we were not at all called on to take Jane. We considered it as an act of charity."

"You were very good, I know. Does Anna go to the picnic on Thursday—or Jacob?"

"Certainly not Anna. Of Jacob's movements I am generally ignorant."

"He is quite come out lately," said Mrs. Mitchell. "Well, if he should like to go," added she, rising; "all I can say is, he can have a seat in our fly. I am going in Mrs. Spencer's carriage. Such an affable person she is! And there'll be Bridget and Mary Jane, and plenty of room for Jacob if he likes it. Of course, I suppose you won't let Jane go?"

"Why?—I don't suppose any such thing. I like her to know the Spencers. Mrs. Spencer told me there was no other girl like her in Wareham!"

Mrs. Mitchell did not take offence. Miss Russell never could manage to offend her. She only laughed and said—

"Then I won't offer her a seat in the fly; for, who knows, she and my girls may quarrel. They're half jealous of her

now, about Agnes Spencer! Good bye—love to Anna and Jacob."

Miss Russell felt very angry, but she could not resist getting up and going to the window to watch Mrs. Mitchell, as she hurried across the Green to her own home, holding up her petticoats and looking sharply on every side to see who was passing.

"Her manners are more vulgar than ever," said Miss Russell, contemptuously, and turning back to her chair.

That very evening there was a note from Mrs. Spencer to Miss Russell, begging, as a great favour, that Janet might be allowed to go to the picnic, and adding, that she, Mrs. Spencer, would take great care of her. There would be a place in the phaeton or the Mitchell's fly; and Agnes and Janet could settle between themselves which they would go in.

Janet had her own reasons for not wishing to go. She had begun of late to feel mortified at her dress, so she ventured to express her wish to remain at home.

Miss Russell said she was not consulted; she was too young to judge for herself; she ought to be glad to be seen and known, and make friends for herself; unless, indeed, she intended always hanging on upon them in idleness?

Stung to the quick, Janet remained silent.

Presently Miss Russell gave Jacob Mrs. Mitchell's message; and added, as she wiped her spectacles, "I don't suppose, however, you will be foolish enough to go."

"Indeed I don't know,—I think I should like it. They are going to see the ruins. It is many years since I was there."

Miss Russell fidgeted, and sighed, and said—"Please yourself! Indeed I don't care—do as you like! Neglect

work for pleasure. Leave me to toil and trouble while you enjoy yourself!"

"No, no, sister, not that! I really don't think I shall go. Now I recollect, I have letters to write on Thursday."

Janet's eyes were fixed on him, and there was a very slight curl of scorn playing about her lips, besides great indignation, against some one.

He looked up, and saw her still burning cheeks and excited expression.

"Give us the Evening Hymn, Janet, will you?" said he.

Janet cast a reproachful glance towards Miss Russell, and pressed her lips tight together; then, as Anna came into the room, she quickly took her seat at the piano, and ran over the scales rapidly and impatiently.

"Do you call that a hymn?" said Miss Russell.

Janet did not answer, but went on with her chords, till Jacob rose and stood by her side, calling Anna also to take her part.

Then Janet played the hymn; but not a word did she sing as she usually did. Before it was concluded—before Jacob's deep voice had finished the last verse of praise, tears had gathered in her eyes, and now they slowly fell, cooling her burning cheek. The last chord was touched with a quieter and gentler hand.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WALK.

JANET had a pleasant thought for the next day, Saturday. She was to go to Old Wareham church on the morrow with Mr. Russell, to see Tom's grave, over which the grass must now be thick. The tears fell, and yet she was happy in the expectation, too happy she feared, for, after all, she might not go! Perhaps Jacob might have forgotten his promise, or, what was more likely, perhaps he could not manage it without raising a storm, which she might have braved for such a purpose herself, but which she felt sorry he should endure for her sake. While they were waiting for Miss Russell before prayers (Anna had gone to see for her sister), Janet ventured to look towards the window, and say—"I hope it will be fine to-morrow!"

"I hope so too, Janet, but it looks something like rain, I fear. However, if it is not fine to-morrow you can come another day."

It was evident he had not forgotten.

"I am half afraid Miss Russell may not like it," said Janet, doubtfully.

"I don't suppose she will."

"She will be angry with you again," said Janet, looking at him.

"Perhaps she will; but still, I think, we must try. The walk is the only thing—if you should get tired!"

The Miss Russells now came in, and the bell was rung for prayers.

Janet left her books that day to mend house-linen for Miss Russell. Martha, the second servant, had attempted to darn a tablecloth, and had done it very badly; so this time all the scolding was for her, and Janet's good and quick work praised whenever Martha happened to be in hearing. For a wonder, Anna asked Janet to walk with her in the evening Anna seldom took walks of pleasure, but she was just now eager in collecting specimens of sea-weed to stick on coloured paper, and to the beach they accordingly went.

While they were stooping and searching for pretty bits, Janet heard a welcome voice, and very soon Agnes and her brother came stumbling and jumping over the pebbles.

"We stayed to consider who you were for some moments," said Agnes; "I half feared to encounter the Miss Hills, who are always somewhere about here. But won't you take a turn on the terrace?—these stones hurt one's ankles so!"

George Spencer, after hoping that Miss Nairn had not caught cold from her drive the other evening, talked to Anna very scientifically about sea-weed; he said he had books full of it, collected from many countries. Anna was delighted. He begged to recommend some good works on the subject, and hoped to be allowed to show her his collection. Then they touched on conchology. Anna knew a few names, and Mr. Spencer advised her to study it, and offered to lend books. Anna was flattered and talkative.

They were now on the terrace or esplanade. Agnes had many acquaintances; Anna a few. They often stopped to speak and shake hands.

"You and I, Miss Nairn, seem to be in the same predicament," said Mr. Spencer; "we know no one! Very sad, is it not?"

"Very," she answered, smiling. "But as far as you are concerned it will soon be mended."

He quoted some well-known lines on solitude in a crowd. Janet had never heard them. This led to poetry in general, and as Anna and Agnes were intent on settling which was the best shop for German wool and patterns, Mr. Spencer continued to talk and Janet to listen till they were in the street, and a few drops of rain made Agnes exclaim,

"Poor mamma! she will say it was all my fault, George. I hope she won't get wet."

"There is plenty of rain in those clouds, but it won't come just yet," he remarked. "Which is your favourite poet, Miss Nairn?" he continued presently, as they again fell behind the others. "I am right to ask this question, ain't I? Young ladies expect one to talk of poetry, I believe."

"Do they? At all events I don't know that I do; for the truth is I have read but very little. Miss Anna's favourites are few, and not to my taste; and Miss Russell classes it with music—as so many mantraps."

"But Mr. Russell—what does he say? I suspect he dissents from his sister's opinions?"

"O yes; in many ways. I have heard him repeat quite long things, several pages; but I don't always know from what. Spenser is a great favourite of his. I know; and some

songs by Burns, which I like better than anything I ever heard. Do you know that Mr. Lewis writes poetry? Indeed he does. I have seen some on a 'Death Bed,' and on 'Lecture Eve,' or 'Thoughts on Lecture Eve.' You needn't laugh, for your sister Eleanor copied them into her book."

"Very likely. But I was not laughing."

There was a little pause, and Janet looked anxiously at the threatening clouds.

"O, I do hope it will be fine to-morrow; surely it is getting lighter there!" she said, eagerly.

Mr. Spencer looked too, and smiled, but said nothing.

"There! You are laughing now in your heart," she said, colouring up a little. "You often do. What is there about me so odd and amusing to you?"

"Nothing odd, I assure you. If I smiled it was only in sympathy with your unexpressed thoughts."

"That isn't possible! You don't know me enough to read me off in that way. How can you know what I was thinking about then? I don't like being laughed at."

"I beg your pardon humbly," he said, now really laughing. "Certainly you do amuse me. You are so very—very——"

"I don't wish to amuse you, I am sure," she interrupted.

He faced round, and taking off his hat made a low bow.

"Nonsense!" said Janet, half smiling, half pettishly, and not quite understanding him. "But let us walk faster; they are gone on so far."

They walked fast to overtake the others, who had commenced running.

"Come," said Agnes; "our house is nearest. Do come,

Miss Anna Russell, and George shall show you his sea-weed. Do come and stay till the rain is over."

"It will not be over," said Anna. "Why doesn't Janet walk faster, I wonder? How lazy some people are!"

George added his entreaties to his sister's, and prevailed upon Anna to return with them, and if it continued to rain, Agnes said, they could go home in the carriage. Janet followed, of course.

When Mrs. Spencer returned, she pressed them to stay and have tea. It was the very thing she liked, to have her friends without any fuss, and in a sociable way.

A message was sent to Queen's Terrace, and Anna was soon surrounded by works on conchology and collections of sea-weed. Agnes beckoned Janet to the pianoforte, and daylight faded away while she still played to the brother and sister; for George had soon left the conchology and joined his sister and Janet in the inner drawing-room.

He accompanied the guests to their home, when at last they found the rain had ceased. Betty smiled as she opened the door, and whispered that "Missis had been quite agreeable to their staying, and she and master have had a game at them things—I forget the name just now!"

Jacob was in the act of shutting up the backgammon board as they came in. Miss Russell had beaten him, and was in good spirits.

Janet told Betty that she had spent a very happy evening.

"Ah!" returned Betty, "it do you good, my dear, to go out a bit; aye, sure it do. 'Tis they old books, Miss Janet, which take away your colour and spirits. I have always heard that the smell of books is reckoned unwholesome."

The next morning an unwelcome sound met Janet. Drop,

drop; splash, splash! All wet and muddy—the school-children with umbrellas and pattens. The cliff was hidden by a misty cloud, and she looked in vain for a bit of blue sky. A gust of wind arose, and an unfortunate woman had her umbrella turned inside out. The rain came harder and faster—there was no hope!

Jacob, in his bad-weather coat, was taking down his hat, Janet looking on wistfully. "Better luck another day, my dear; God bless you," and this made her happy in spite of the disappointment.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MITCHELLS AT HOME.

Perhaps it was true, as Miss Russell said, that it was ungrateful in Janet not to like going to the Mitchells. But certain it is that she very much disliked it. However, she was obliged to do so occasionally. There had been a little quarrel, or something like it, alluded to before, between the young ones; owing to Edward Mitchell persisting in accompanying Bridget and Janet with his flute, when Janet went to give the former a music lesson, which Miss Russell had desired her to do. To show that this quarrel was made up, and they were "good friends" again, after Janet's being severely reprimanded at home for giving herself airs, Mrs. Mitchell invited her to drink tea and spend the evening. Very unwillingly—for she gave up a walk with Agnes Spencer—very unwillingly, Janet obeyed orders, and went.

They were all at the window. The Mitchells were fond of looking out of window. "Oh, look, there is Mr. Spencer!" cried Bridget, just as Janet entered. Mr. Mitchell took one hand out of his pocket, and held out three cold fingers to her, then sauntered out up the street towards the hotel, his favourite lounge. After the usual greetings, the party returned to speak of Mr. Spencer.

"He is a fine young man, I understand," said the mother. "There goes a stranger! Visitors are pouring in, I am told. It is a good season. But, Janet, you have heard what Mr. Bunny has lost in that storm? No? Bless me! all Wareham is talking of it. 600*l.* they say won't clear his damages!"

"Is Mr. Spencer very handsome? You have seen him?" inquired Mary Jane.

"I don't know; I suppose he is."

"Don't you know? How droll! I am told he is very handsome, and as tall as papa," rejoined Mary Jane. "We shall see him at the picnic, however."

"What a sweet, affable woman Mrs. Spencer is! And Miss Spencer so amiable and good, and useful, and they are not at all proud!" said Bridget.

Janet looked scornful, and remained silent.

"Look, Janet! look, Bridget!" exclaimed Mary Jane. "There is that same gentleman with Miss Agnes Spencer. I wonder who it is."

"How can you stare out of window so?" said Janet, colouring up; while Bridget ran forward, but was too late to see the party.

"Why, what are windows made for?" asked Mrs. Mitchell, with her merry laugh. "Here comes papa with his news; but we have forestalled him."

Mr. Mitchell came in with his hat on.

"Some friend of Mr. Spencer's is arrived—left his gig and horough-bred mare at Bunny's—a capital turn out—groom—and a splendid Newfoundland dog. By-the-bye, I wonder if that creature would have pulled out Jacob, hey?"

"Ah," returned his wife. "He will be at the picnic. Papa! you must give the girls new bonnets, d'ye hear?"

"Catch me! Mary Jane, what do you say?"

"Nothing, papa."

"You, Bridget the sapient, what is your opinion?"

"I shall be very much obliged, I am sure; but I wouldn't inconvenience you, for I can make my best bonnet do again, with turning."

"How prudent our Bridget is, to be sure!" said Mrs. Mitchell, laughing, and swaying herself from side to side. "O, she's cut out for Cousin Jacob! Two old sober-sides together! I often think it will come to pass."

It was lucky that no one saw Janet's burning colour and indignant toss of the head.

"You think wrongly, Mrs. Mitchell," said her husband. "You are an acute woman in your way; but you are wrong. Bridget must wear the willow; for as sure as I am alive Cousin Jacob is casting an eye in another quarter."

"What can you mean, hey, Mr. Mitchell? Tell me what you mean!" said his wife, in a quick, sharp, vehement way.

"O papa! As if I cared for Jacob Russell!—old enough to be my father!" said Bridget, shyly.

"I leave you to find out—and now come into the garden," said the father, sauntering away.

The garden consisted of one or two narrow paths, amid fruit bushes and rows of flower-pots containing cuttings. At the further end, in a sheltered corner, stood two hothouses, of which Mr. Mitchell was proud. He was a florist, and counted the spots on his geraniums as a draper would his prints. There was no attempt at laying out the ground to advantage; no happy combination of colour, no grouping of shrubs or sweep of lawn—not even a stiff, tidy box edging to mark the paths from the borders. All was given up to pre-

paration; except the celebrated raspberry-bushes, and one or two choice apple-trees, there was nothing in the garden but vegetables and rummage. Yet no one could cut such bouquets as Mr. Mitchell—no window had such perfect specimens of plants. The garden was a favourite resort to the young people; and, thanks to their neighbour's horse-chestnuts, and lilacs, and laburnums, there was a pretty bower of greenery above the cob-wall, and even a small piece of shade. Here they had placed a seat, and, what is more, a stepping-stone, by means of which they could stand and peep over the wall, on to the sloping lawn and terrace walk of their neighbour.

Observations as to how often Mr. Hobbs walked there, and who were his visitors, formed a considerable part of the business of the day. And as the said Mr. Hobbs was a bachelor of somewhat eccentric and retired habits, about whom very few persons in Wareham knew anything, these observations were very precious to the inquiring mind of the Mitchell family.

"Now do tell us," said the wife, putting her arm into her husband's, "do tell us what you mean?"

Mr. Mitchell looked as if he enjoyed playing with his wife's curiosity, and for some time made no reply; but at last he turned round rather suddenly, upsetting three or four flower-pots as he did so, and facing the three girls, he said, "Miss Nairn can vouch for what I say."

Janet looked an inquiry, but did not vouchsafe a word.

"Come now, isn't friend Jacob very particular in his attentions and admiration of a certain young lady? Ah, I see by your colour you know what I mean! Good taste he shows, too, for she's a pretty girl, and I suppose has the

wherewithal; though, for that matter, Russell can afford to marry whom he likes."

At this juncture, the heir of the Mitchells appeared. He wore a very gay waistcoat elaborately embroidered with braid and gold buttons; his tie and pin were very striking, and in the height, or, rather, utmost "length" of fashion; in fact, he flattered himself that his "get up" was unexceptionable, and that his appearance was altogether admirable. His hat was more than usually stuck on one side of his curly locks as he approached the party, whistling a waltz, and twirling a sprig of verbena. There was even more assumption than usual, more self-confidence, in his low bow and smile to Janet, which she returned with lofty dignity worthy of a duchess at least.

"We were talking of Mr. Russell, Edward," said his mother.

"Indeed! and what are you saying of the old chap?"

"Why, that he is coming out as a Benedict!"

"And the Beatrice?" Edward asked, glancing towards Janet, to see if she appreciated his knowledge of Shakespeare.

"Oh Edward! you know!" said Mr. Mitchell.

"Hang me if I do."

"Well, take care, or he'll beat you in the race, for I think you have a sneaking liking in the same quarter."

"Happy to have my taste confirmed by so illustrious an individual, I am sure, sir. But, bless me, governor, you can't be alluding to Miss Spencer, surely? Oh, you're too bad! That beats everything I ever heard! Good, very good! Well, he may admire as much as he likes, but I hope you don't expect a pretty girl like her to do anything but laugh at such an old fogie!"

"Laugh! Yes, she laughs, and very prettily too; and I only know she is a great deal with him, and was heard loud in his praises at a party the other evening. Russell is no bad spec. He is well off, and is a good fellow. After all, he is not so old as it is the fashion to consider him."

"Pardon me, my good sir," returned the son; "but really, 'pon my word, I have reasons for disbelieving in Mr. Russell's good fortune. Believe me, the young lady is only amusing herself and laughing at my friend."

"Janet! you are so intimate with her, you must know," said Bridget.

But Janet turned away with flashing eyes. "I know nothing about it! I wonder at your spreading such reports!"

She left them, and stooping over a rose-bush apparently studied the buds very closely. But a host of fiery thoughts passed over her. Supreme dislike and indignation towards the Mitchells was foremost. Her friends—her two especial friends—to be so talked of! It was high treason!—insulting! As to the truth of it, she did not then consider about it.

The Mitchells—Edward Mitchell presuming to understand Agnes!—to know what she meant! And to put down Mr. Russell in that insolent, vulgar way—whose very shoestring he was not fit to touch! There was no room for any other thought than internally resolving never to put herself in the way of hearing such slander repeated, whatever might be the displeasure incurred by refusing invitations. Janet stiffly consented to return to the house with the girls, to see some new music. Anything to keep away from Edward.

Meanwhile that young man, who was utterly unconscious of having given offence, admired her graceful walk, the proud

carriage of the head, and the fire of the eye, in the following euphonious terms :—

"By Jove! she's a queen! Don't her eyes sparkle? And how her colour comes and goes! She is a miniature Juno! Agnes Spencer! Why, put Agnes Spencer's dress on this one, and she'd beat her hollow! Not but what her laughing blue eyes are very pretty, and she has style and that sort of thing, and can give a gracious bow, too, in passing; but what are her blue eyes to this one's black orbs with the long lashes? Little gipsy! I'll bring her down yet. The fact is, she's shy—I always say she's shy, which accounts for her touch-and-go manner. I'm fond of her; I am rather spoony about her, I confess, with all her airs."

"She has a temper of her own, I'm sure, and I hope you will never take any fancy that way," said his mother.

Then they talked of some business Edward had been engaged in; he, making his parents believe that he had convinced and silenced a board of magistrates, and that no one in the county knew more law than "Edward Mitchell, Esq. under-clerk to the magistrates and judges."

With all their faults, there was a great deal of real good-nature about the girls, and when they got together, and fell into harmless chatter about dress, and music, and other trifles, Janet forgot her anger, and chatted too. During tea Edward was very patronising, and tried hard to overcome her "shyness," but he was obliged to content himself with admiring the curling lip and haughty set of the well-shaped head; for he could get but few words from Janet, even though he openly approved the "amazing" thickness of her hair, and wished his sisters would take a hint from her how to dispose of their own light and scant locks.

After tea the young ladies had a stroll on the beach. At a distance they saw Mr. Russell, but Janet positively refused to follow him, saying he enjoyed a solitary walk. They left her in Queen's Terrace, with expressions of pleasure at the idea of meeting her at the picnic.

When in her bed Janet remembered those words—"very particular in his attentions and admiration of a young lady." Was it really so?—The two people she liked best in the world! Why did the thought come rather as a trouble than a pleasure? Why did her heart beat with a strange flutter, and a pang pass through her like a sword?

Janet did not know. But she repulsed the idea as disagreeable, and going over in fancy all the times she had seen them together, she decided that it was the Mitchells' nonsense. Mr. Russell evidently liked young people. He had always liked her—he said so. He was not a marrying man. Certainly he did talk and laugh with Agnes. But who did not? who could help it? For the first time, she recalled that sunny smile and winning manner with a shadow on the pleasure. Henceforth there was a thorn in the new-found happiness. Then she scolded herself for being jealous; it was the old story, just as she used to be jealous of her father's noticing any one else! It was worse here, for what claim had she to be first? Agnes, in every way her superior, so gifted in the power to win love, was sure to be more liked than herself—— A long sigh for the old time, when, as her teacher, she had him all to herself, would rise; and so, between self-blame, and the throbbings of a naturally exclusive, loving and jealous heart—deep in the introspections which women love—she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XX.

A PICNIC.

A PICNIC, or rambling party, as it was generally called at Wareham, may, if well mananged, be a pleasant and sociable way of seeing one's neighbours and enjoying a summer day.

But it may also be as dull, disagreeable, and doleful an attempt to bring human beings together as can be found.

The older and more experienced of the party, therefore, consult the clouds and the almanac, and enter soberly into the arrangements, being, above all things, careful to see that "a good dinner is provided." But the young, the free foolish young ones, care nothing for weather or dinner. A shower will only make a little fun. If it is too hot, shade can be found, and the return in the cool of the evening by moonlight will be delightful. If it is chilly, one can but wrap up and walk about. As to dinner, perhaps they expect it will rise out of the ground, or that Jack's wondrous Table Cloth still exists. When they are hungry, of course there will be something to eat. The mammas will see to all that.

A day's pleasure—several hours devoted to free social intercourse, with the fun of driving or riding, laughing and talking, wandering about in select little parties, finding some

adventure, losing their way perhaps—all this is delightful in prospect.

To Janet, who had hitherto led so secluded a life, and knew nothing of the near neighbourhood of Wareham, it was an extreme treat. She was up very early, and was almost tired before she set off. But the clear atmosphere and soft refreshing breeze revived all her hopes. Never before had Mr. Spencer found her so talkative, or so willing to smile and be amused at his jokes or stories. In high good humour they drew up at the old gateway, covered with ivy, through which other carriages had preceded them.

Dostock Abbey boasted of some very respectable ruins, and the owner not only threw open the extensive grounds and gardens to the public, but he allowed picnics to be held there, so that it was a favourite resort of the Wareham people.

There was a magnificent view of the sea from some parts of the grounds, but the great attraction was the deep, thick wood, famous for wild flowers, and the grotto.

A crowd of gay and well-dressed people were standing about, when our party arrived. The Spencers knew nearly every one, Janet no one; so that she began to feel a little strange and awkward.

Agnes was claimed by the stranger whom the Mitchells had observed. His name was Trevor, and his wife was there also. They proposed going at once to see the gardens, and Janet found herself alone in the crowd, for Mrs. Spencer was surrounded by acquaintances, and even the Mitchells were busy with a party.

She was colouring up with a slight feeling of being deserted, and blaming Agnes for running away, when Mr.

Spencer came up to her—"Very sorry he had been so long detained in seeing the horses stabled—such a crowd of horses! And his man, a stupid fellow; where was his mother—and Agnes?—Oh!——" With all this, smiles and bows were given here and there, and then, offering his arm to Janet, he proposed their following the lead and seeing the lions.

The flowers and fruit were worth seeing. Such perfect roses, and houses full of geraniums, so bright and refined—so delicately soft and exquisitely shaped! The gardener was quietly proud; a well-informed, but not over-polite man, who fully appreciated admiration of his pets, but not given to many words.

Janet and Mr. Spencer lingered still, unwilling to leave the spot. Janet thought it the most beautiful thing she had ever seen. She flitted about like a newborn butterfly among the beautiful blossoms. She was eager in her admiration of the good taste displayed in the arrangement. It was no careless or unskilful eye that had planned the disposal of the colours.

Most of the party had hurried on towards the grotto, and Mr. Spencer hinted that they had better follow the example. Just as they were going, the gardener, in a marked manner, offered Janet a very choice bouquet, which he had been cutting. His look and manner made her blush a little; but the colour deepened considerably, as Mr. Spencer laughed, and said the man had good taste, and had evidently meant by it to crown the queen of the party. Such speeches may mean nothing; they may also, by manner and tone of voice, convey much. Perhaps it was Janet's simple ignorance of society; but more than once Mr. Spencer's words

caused her heart to flutter with a feeling not altogether unpleasant, and certainly very new to her. When the party were gathered together under shadow of the ruins for dinner, Mrs. Spencer and Agnes, and the Mitchells, remarked her flowers and wondered how she got them. There was a good deal of light talking and laughing about it. Anything serves when people are gay, and the "Queen's" health was duly proposed and drunk. Janet, to whom all was new and strange, laughed at the speeches which others thought dull; but when Mr. Spencer returned thanks for her, she felt the difference. He was very fluent, with a happy selection of words. Gay wit and fun brought peals of laughter, and Janet thought him very clever, very agreeable, and very kind. All the day he seemed to make it his business to attend on her.

He told her who was who, led her to every place worth seeing, and beguiled the time by a store of anecdotes, and displaying considerable information about places.

He seemed to find out how disagreeable Edward Mitchell's familiar manner was to her, and sheltered her from him.

Every awkwardness or roughness was softened or removed. This told on Janet. Even her sworn admirer and friend, Agnes, was surprised at the play and sparkle in her speaking face. She had watched with a little anxiety at first; but Janet's ease, produced by George's kindness, and the ready, apt answers she made to his remarks, astonished and delighted Agnes. She told her mother she was proud of her friend—"that not one of all the party was to be compared in beauty to Janet Nairn!"

The wood had been left to the afternoon, and, leaving the *débris* of the feast to be gathered up by servants, the party,

all but a few elderly chaperones, set off for a walk. Janet was now with Agnes, and George with his friends, Colonel Trevor and his wife.

"Oh, Agnes! isn't it a delightful day?"

"Yes—pretty well! No wonder you think so, you creature, with every one looking at you and admiring you! I shall be half jealous— But see, the Mitchells are coming; do let us avoid them."

Saying this, the two girls turned off the right road, and, following a small track, soon came into a thick part of the wood, where the shade was very pleasant. They sat down on a heap of stones, near which the ground was gemmed with anemones and blue-bells, and fell again into that light, girlish talk, which, if not very deep or very clever, has a certain charm of its own,—where bright fancies are playfully hinted at, young hopes lightly touched. No intercourse can be pleasanter than that of two pure-minded girls, untouched by the world.

To-day there was no drawback to Janet's pleasure. No shadow fell on her enjoyment. For once, she bade adieu to care and trouble. Almost surprised at herself and her new mood, the deeper fountains of her spirit were closed, the large, passionate heart, which was ever craving to be filled, beat quietly, and sported with the ease and gaiety around her. If this was what was meant by Society, how she should like it!

With a keen eye for beauty in any form, and a nice taste, not easily pleased, the number of nice-looking people, the groups of well-chosen dresses, the beauty of the scene and the day,—such a combination of happy influences gave an unwonted quiet pleasure. Here was no jar, no crabbed

opposition, or offence to ear and eye. The few exceptions were easily overlooked in the crowd.

Agnes rejoiced with the fulness of a truly amiable temper in her friend's joy. Time flew on, and the shadows of the trees were long, before they remembered they had left the party with the intention of sitting there for ten minutes. Agnes's tiny watch was consulted, and they started to find how long they had been there. A "halloo" was very soon heard, which they knew to be Mr. Spencer's voice.

He was eager in his exclamations of annoyance—declared his mother was going to faint, and that quite a commotion had been caused, and a hue-and-cry up, for the lost ladies.

"Oh, we have been very happy!" said Agnes.

"Doubtless; but as you came to be with a party, pardon me, it is hardly good manners. Dancing has commenced."

This news quickened Agnes' steps. Janet cared less about it. She had not danced since she left Manchester, and felt ignorant about it.

At first she absolutely refused to stand up with George, though he used every persuasive argument he could find.

After watching the first quadrille, however, her feet began to move to the music, and when he left his partner he came again to urge her to try with him; he would teach her, he said, and she took his arm and joined them.

She soon found herself pretty well at home in step and figure, and George was not less agreeable as a partner than in any other capacity. He certainly had the art of putting people at their ease, and infusing self-confidence, though his compliments were delicate.

Janet's pleasure was somewhat checked, by being asked for the next dance by Edward Mitchell.

She accepted him coldly enough, but he did not seem to see it. He expressed his pleasure at her being at the party. "A very nice party, indeed—a great deal of beauty; but he need not say who bore away the palm. That had been already decided, he saw. He envied the lucky man who gave the flowers. He was not aware that Miss Nairn was so fond of flowers. He should make a special note of it in future."

"'Pon my word you dance very well," he went on. "I had no notion you had learnt. I thought it a forbidden exercise with the old people. I wish they'd have a waltz, quadrilles are bores!"

As soon as she could get free, Janet took shelter by Mrs. Spencer's side, giving a very low bow to her partner; so very low, that it caused him to twitch up his neckcloth and pull his curls. He afterwards told his sisters that the girl's head was turned by being at a party, and his asking her to dance.

Mr. Spencer was asked by two or three gentlemen to introduce them to Janet. She danced a good deal, but liked her first partner the best.

Mrs. Spencer began to dread the "start" home. She was sure, with so many horses, theirs would be frisky. She did not like to spoil the young people's pleasure, and Agnes had just been led off for a waltz. Janet had declined, though George asked her, being tired. She was watching Agnes' beautiful dancing, when, in a plaintive, appealing tone, Mrs. Spencer asked her son if he would very much mind going at once?

"Nonsense, mother," said George. "Indeed, I cannot!"

"O! my dear George, you know how fresh the horses are,

and the roads are dreadful! I hate to be unkind—but if you would but get off quietly before they all set off!"

"I am quite ready," said Janet, "if you think Agnes will approve of being left."

"I'll tell her," said George, with sudden change of manner. "Of course she won't mind. Yes, mother, we will go at once."

Agnes' smile of consent had just a dash of sly fun in it.

The carriage was soon ready, and Mrs. Spencer, Mrs. Mitchell, and Janet, walked to the old gateway to meet it.

In getting up, Janet twisted her ancle a little; but the drive was too pleasant to allow her to think much of the aching which followed.

"Those who stay late, will have a charming drive by the moonlight," said George.

"Oh, it is charming now, I think! That soft, lovely, amber light, and the cool evening air. It is so refreshing! After all, the coming home is as pleasant as any part."

Mr. Spencer smiled. "I am glad you think so; I do, under the present arrangement."

After a pause, he said—"This has been the pleasantest party of the kind I ever was at."

"What!—Oh, no! Surely not better than that one in Italy, near Naples, with the orange-grove and the Italian singing?"

He smiled again. "I had no idea you took in my description so well. That was a marked day, certainly;—but after all there is a pleasure, independent of blue sky or orange-groves. The party—the people—one's companion— No, I feel as if I had never enjoyed a party as I have to-day," and his voice fell at the last words!

Her eyes drooped under the look he bent on her, and she made no answer. It was very sweet to be liked!

After a little while, he hoped this was the beginning of her enjoying a little more of society than he understood she had hitherto had. She was led on to speak as she never had before, except to Agnes, of her present and her former life.

With faltering voice she even alluded to her father, though the next moment she bit her lips, and felt vexed with herself. But a searching look quickly thrown at him relieved her. The grave, sympathising kindness expressed in every feature could not be resisted.

It seemed as if he was even kinder after this confession, as she almost called it.

He suddenly caught his mother's fears about the cold, and persisted in helping to wrap a shawl round her, with—Janet thought—wonderful skill and care for a man, though Mrs. Spencer sat in agony the while, lest the horses should start off.

As they drew near Wareham, Janet said very earnestly—"How kind of Mrs. Spencer to give me this treat! And you too—you have been very kind to me. I thank you!"

What he would have said is not known, for at a sudden turn in the road they came upon Mr. Russell.

He was surprised at seeing them so soon. He had intended walking to meet them at least two miles further on.

"I suppose, Janet, you are too tired to walk back with me, though it is but a short way across the fields?"

Her look and gesture were in eager acceptance of the offer, though George did say it was a cheat, and that he would not allow it. But the twisted ancle was an obstacle.

"I am afraid I am lame."

"Oh, yes, of course; you would be mad to walk! I will drive you to the door," said George. "She has twisted her

ancle, Mr. Russell; it would be very wrong to walk on it."

Mr. Russell looked a little disappointed, but he told her to stay where she was, and Mrs. Mitchell laughed, and bade him prolong his walk. "He would soon meet the fly, and would find a welcome and a seat, if not a companion."

How provoked Janet felt at her sprained foot! She wore a vexed look for the first time that day. But she recollected herself, and tried to talk, feeling as if she was desperately ungrateful, particularly when at parting George gave such a hearty, friendly shake of the hand, and looked "so very kind;" but she could not help thinking of Agnes walking home with Mr. Russell, and telling him all the pleasures of the day.

The reception at home was rather chilly—rather a contrast to the rest of the day. Miss Russell only looked angry, but Anna exclaimed, in a shrill tone:—

"Well, Janet, I hope you behaved well, and gave yourself no airs? So you danced with Mr. Spencer! How very kind of him. I shall express my obligations to him, I am sure. I take it quite as a compliment to us, sister! Of course, Janet, you know *why* he asked you?"

Betty was waiting with eager eyes to hear the news, and while she fomented Janet's ancle, asked questions, and smiled approval, hoping Miss Janet would get many such pleasant times; repeating that she was sure she knew who were the two most "likely" looking young ladies there, and regretting that master should have kept at home instead of "paying his court to that sweet miss who any one could see thought much of him—most as much as he deserved."

CHAPTER XXI.

VARIOUS MATTERS.

JANET was quite lame the next day. Betty insisted on her keeping her foot up, so the couch was wheeled round and Janet opened her book. How dull the History of France seemed that morning! The pages were turned, but little of the meaning entered her mind. She was tired, and her ancle ached, so after some fruitless effort to force her attention to the book, she shut her eyes and gave herself up to dreamy thoughts. Yesterday was acted over again.

That first peep into the gay world was very tempting. Janet felt conscious of power to shine therein, and she sighed to remember that as it was her first, so it might very probably be her last taste of such pleasures.

She thought how kind and pleasant Mr. Spencer had been. Did she like him very much? She considered for some time. Perhaps not "very much," but she did like him; he was a pleasant acquisition. Besides, he had saved Mr. Russell's life. She was glad she did really like Agnes' brother. It would have been awkward and disagreeable otherwise.

She wondered a little, in half-shaped thoughts, what was his motive for seeking her. Could it be to please Agnes? A

curious kind of half-smile played round her lips, and a blush rose, as with head thrown back, in careless, graceful, *abandon*, she listened to the whisper which fluttered at her heart, "to please himself, rather." Was it possible that she had any portion of those gifts she had read of: gifts which win admiration and applause and love? O, she was glad! It would help her to attain all she desired—to be to some one what she had read other women had been. First—chosen out of all the world, loved, cherished! If she ever again met her father, would he be pleased? Would his taste for beauty be satisfied? Would he, in fact, ever look at her as—as—Mr. Spencer did once, if not twice, yesterday?

From that off flew the rapid thoughts over the sea, and rested on that father, lost, but not forgotten.

Hers was not a temperament to forget what she had once loved. In fancy she heard him calling her his "darling Janet —his beautiful child—her mother's own child." Tears dimmed her eyes as she remembered how long it was since she had heard his voice. Where was he? So many years—and no tidings! How could she ever for one moment forget him! It seemed unnatural for her to be dancing, or gay.

A sharp voice startled her; the French History fell to the ground.

"Well, Janet," said Miss Anna, "really you take it easily. I should think young ladies who can dance, and be so gay, and spend hours in company, were strong enough to sit up in a chair. *I* should consider so, at any rate. Is this the way to train yourself to teach others? And I understand, Janet —I heard to-day—where I need not say—that your head is a little turned by Mr. Spencer's kindness—and that you choose to give yourself airs, and behave proudly to the Mitchells.

Mr. Lewis must talk to you again. But I came now to say that you are desired to go into the parlour, where Mr. Spencer is waiting to hear you play a waltz. He was kind enough to bring me some books. Come, do rouse yourself."

Janet was roused. She jumped up in a moment, and followed Anna into the parlour, very much as if she had been stung.

"I am sorry to see you so lame," said George.

"Lame! What is the matter? Are you really lame, Janet?" Anna quickly observed. "O, I believe it is only that couch—such a bad habit."

Janet made no answer; and when George said, "I have brought the waltz you wished to have," she could not immediately say, "Thank you."

"Well, Miss Anna Russell," said he, turning to her, with ready tact; "here is work for you. Keep the books as long as you like. Shall you be sea-weed gathering this evening?" and he turned as he spoke so as to include Janet in the question.

Anna said, "No; she did not often indulge herself with such idle hours; she was engaged to go with his excellent sister to the school in the afternoon."

"O, Eleanor! I scarcely ever see her. Mr. Lewis ought to give her a salary, I think," said George.

There was a little silence, during which Jacob's voice was heard in the passage asking for Janet.

"What can Jacob be here for at this hour?" said Anna.

Janet, with a blush, rose and went to the door.

"Here I am, Mr. Jacob."

"Janet," he said, "I want you a moment," and he held up a letter.

The blush now deepened, and with a beating heart she sprang to him, holding out her hands.

"A letter! O, Mr. Jacob! for me?"

"It has the Exeter postmark, Janet. Perhaps you had better read it in your room."

Janet, however, opened the letter where she was, and changed colour as she read. Then impatiently stamping her foot, she tore it in two and hid her face with her hand.

"What is it, my dear?" asked Mr. Russell, kindly.

"O! I thought—I hoped it was from papa. But it isn't—it is only—from *her*. But he is alive—he lives!"

In her excitement she leant her head on Jacob's arm, and repeated, "He lives, Mr. Jacob."

The parlour door opened. George Spencer was saying, "Good morning." Anna's voice grated on her ear. She hastily ran to her room and shut herself in,—threw herself her knees before the couch, and wept bitterly—bitterly.

When the first mingled grief and joy at hearing of her father had passed a little, the sobs and tears stopped, and putting the torn letter together she read her mother's words again with glowing cheeks, and with pride and shame in her countenance :—

"My dear Janet,

"How long it is since I saw you! but no doubt you are grown up and able to help your unfortunate mother. Mr. Russell tells me all about you, my dear, and how handsome you are; perhaps it will procure you a husband; I am sure I hope so. I am in great want, my dear. I am in real distress. I wouldn't otherwise apply to you, but you will not let me beg in vain. Send me a little money, dear Janet, for

my uncle has taken offence and will do nothing more for me, and Ellen is a great expense. My health is dreadful. If you haven't got any, ask your friend Mr. Russell, for your mother. Represent my destitute and sad state; and, remember, while you are living in plenty your mother is starving! I was out when Mr. R. last called, or I would have begged him myself. They say he is rich. I heard of your unhappy father. He was well and comfortably off; much more so than I am. My trials are great, indeed! I entreat you to help me, my dear Janet.—Your unhappy and affectionate mother,

"E. Nairn."

Janet now tore the letter into very small pieces; and the determination grew stronger and stronger to beg Agnes to try and get a situation for her as governess amongst her large acquaintance. Anything—anything would do! If her stepmother really wanted money, she would work for her, but never beg *them*—not even Mr. Jacob. Had he guessed what was in the letter? Could her mother have ever asked him for anything?

Janet's head ached too much to go into the parlour for dinner, and her ancle, which was now much swollen and very painful, was quite a sufficient excuse. Betty shook her head, and said, "My dear, I know you ought to keep still," and Miss Russell ordered fomentations, and forbade Janet to leave her room.

Several days passed, and still Janet was a prisoner. Sunday came, and she could not walk across the room without pain. The walk with Mr. Jacob to Old Wareham was again put off.

Agnes often came to see Janet while her ancle kept her a prisoner, and brought her flowers and bright thoughts. Agnes was impatient for the ancle to get well—well enough for Janet to take a drive. The intimacy between the Spencers and Russells was increasing rapidly. George gave lessons to Miss Anna on conchology; Mrs. Spencer prevailed on Miss Russell to drive with her; and Agnes' smiles often induced Jacob to turn back with her on the cliff path, or to spend an hour with them of an evening.

Betty was delighted at all this. One evening, however, she was a little put out. Mrs. Spencer's servant came with a message, and while he waited he amused himself with talking to Martha in the kitchen.

"Your master don't wear a very good coat, hey!—he's a rum kind of dresser!"

"Oh," said Betty, concealing her annoyance, "Mr. Russell is so well known here! 'Tis an old family hereabouts—every one in the parish knows him. 'Tisn't like they mushrooms that spring up in an hour. Mr. Russell don't depend on brass buttons and velvet collars, not he!"

After the footman was gone, however, Betty took out Mr. Jacob's best coat, and narrowly looked it over. "He ought to have a better, that's certain; and the ladies ought to tell him. . . . Miss Janet, my dear," said she, going to Janet's room, "your eyes are bright and sharp; will you put a stitch here to master's coat for me? 'Tis just a rip in the sleeve. Here's some fine silk. Thank'ee, my dear! I thought you would. Somehow, I know from my own feelings, 'tis pleasant to do ever so little for him. . . . And so you are going to drive, Miss Janet, to-day, my dear!—I'm glad of that—and miss is too. It is uncommonly pleasant in Mrs. Spencer to be

so attentive. Such a nice carriage! I am sure I wish master would set up one; 'twould be good for the ladies and you. Costs money, to be sure; but then, you see, they haven't got many to spend it on. But they are saving upon themselves, any way, though I'll answer for it there isn't a family gives away more in all Wareham. I heard old Sally Bingle say, t'other day, Mr. Jacob was the best friend ever she had."

So Betty talked till the coat was mended; and Janet said: "Bring me all your work, Betty; I like to do it—better even than going in Mrs. Spencer's fine carriage."

Every day Janet went out with Mrs. Spencer; thus she saw less of Agnes, and more of George.

Mr. Mitchell again asked his wife what she thought now of Cousin Jacob.

"Nonsense, Mr. Mitchell! But I'll tell you what I do think of—I do think that young Spencer is in love with Janet. You know I am often out with them in the carriage, and he talks a great deal to her, in a very particular manner."

"Ha! ha! Good, Mrs. Mitchell!—'very particular!' That's just what you women always say! What will the girls say—our girls? Do they like little black-eyed Janet to steal all the hearts?"

"Oh, never mind; their turn will come next! Bridget is only eighteen, and you know I was twenty-three before you said a word to me; besides, I still say Jacob is the man for Bridget."

"Poor Jacob!—he takes solitary walks," said Mr. Mitchell.

"So he always did," interrupted Mrs. Mitchell.

"And he is absent—"

"So he always was. I don't deny it—perhaps it is so;

but I will say there is nothing about him to warrant your saying so, Mr. Mitchell."

"Well, well, my dear; time will show. Mark my words, Jacob is just the very man to be taken in some fine day—the —very—man; and the very age, too!" pronouncing the last few words in a slow, emphatic manner, with his hands in his pockets, and his wife's arm drawn through his, they walked out to visit the geraniums.

Meanwhile, George Spencer pleased his mother by putting off his intended visit to Ireland, and being apparently more reconciled to Devonshire roads, saying, "that putting the Devonshire cream into the balance, one might be said to weigh against the other."

The intimacy between the Spencers and Russells was, of course, observed, and George's admiration of Janet became a favourite topic among a certain set at Wareham. People expressed surprise, and then supposed that he was only amusing himself, though perhaps he was tempted by the money sure to come to her through Mr. Russell. Mr. Lewis was applied to—he was sure to know the truth, being so intimate, and, in fact, he had done so much towards the girl's education. "What were the facts? Who was she?"

Mr. Lewis, so pressed, spoke the truth; and it was the sight of the dismay and wonder his hearers displayed at the bare idea of Mr. Spencer's stooping so low, that first opened his own eyes to the enormous folly he had been all but tempted to commit. For Mr. Lewis was not insensible to the attraction of youth and a pretty face. He felt conscious that he had several times turned out of his way for the sake of catching a glimpse of her graceful walk; and felt rather queerish too, sometimes, on the rare occasions that Janet had

smiled on him. There was something rather curious in her smile,—perhaps because it came so seldom,—but it was very sweet. Then her eyes were magnificent, and no one he had ever seen had such hair! Mr. Lewis professed to be very fond of music, too, and Janet's touch was uncommon. He felt all the fascination, while he was quite aware of her defective temper; but that might improve! Thinking gravely over these things now, he rejoiced that he had not as yet done anything to be remarked—that he had not committed himself. His position allowed of a certain intimacy, of course; but Mr. Lewis sighed at his sense of duty—all that he owed himself and his position. It would not do to lower himself; he must be careful in future, and withdraw a little. He hoped Janet would not fret too much; for he liked her, in spite of her wilful ways, and felt interested in her. But, really—well, it was a providential thing his eyes had been fully opened before too late! And Mr. Lewis sighed again, then pushed his hair back, flourished his cambric hankerchief, and—blew his nose!

CHAPTER XXII.

CONSULTATIONS.

Miss Rose had a famous strawberry garden, and for many years had annually given a strawberry party, which was thought one of the pleasantest meetings of the season. Owing to ill-health, two or three summers had passed without this party; but now, wishing to return the attentions her friends the Spencers had received, she issued invitations, and, after a little coaxing from her godson George, she resolved to end the evening with a dance.

"Oh dear Miss Russell," said Agnes in her prettiest and most coaxing way, "you will allow Janet to go, I know? She is wanted to play. Miss Rose is not going to have any band, but means to trust to us for helping her, and Janet is so good at playing dance music! Mayn't she come?

Leave was granted, though Miss Russell said she could not approve of dancing. But it was well for her to learn to make herself useful, and turn all that time wasted at the piano, to account. Janet was not in the room, but when she heard what had been done she said, "Where is the use, Agnes, of asking this? I cannot and will not go. How can I? You know I have no dress."

"Oh, that will be managed, we will contrive," and Agnes kissed her hand with a mocking smile as she tripped out of the room.

Betty had been a listener, and she wished the tale she heard when she was a child could come true, about the fairy godmother.

"But do 'ee axe of master, Miss Janet! Good now, he never saith nay to no one."

"As if I would ask him for a dress! No, indeed, and I don't wish—I don't care about going! It is no use for me to begin to like such things. It won't do."

Betty said no more then, but she managed to see her master, and have rather a long "tell," as she called it, with him. This led to sundry consultations between Agnes Spencer and Mr. Russell. Janet wondered what they could have to say to each other, and Agnes' bright saucy look of mystery gave her a cold chill.

She returned, with apparently new vigour, to her solitary studies, and invented excuses to avoid joining the evening walks.

When Agnes entreated her to come, and urged as a reason that Mr. Russell would be so vexed, Janet answered moodily that he did not want her. There were quite enough without her, and she was too tired, or too busy.

On one occasion Agnes seemed a little hurt at her refusal, and taking off her own bonnet, she said, "Very well, if you won't come, I will stay too. I am thoughtless enough, and pretty hard-hearted, but to leave you here in the blues, night after night, while I am laughing, and talking, and inhaling the delicious air, is more than even I can stand." Agnes seated herself on a low stool in front of Janet, and looked

her in the face in a half earnest, half playful manner, and said, "Now, what is it, Janet? A trouble shared is a trouble spared."

"Nothing."

"Nothing—to make you turn grave, and keep you a hermit? Nothing? Oh, Janet! always tell the truth, as Miss Mitchell said the other day."

Janet smiled, she could not help it. "Oh, Agnes, don't be absurd. One can't always be so very bright—at least I can't. But if you are really my friend you will help me to get a situation as governess. Indeed, I mean it!"

"What fresh grievance has the poor soul had? Has Miss Russell been scolding, or Anna patronising; or is it that Mr. Lewis has ceased his visits? Tell us, dear."

"Nothing of the kind! No, not that; but I have strong reasons for not wishing to remain here. I wish," she added, rising, and colouring up with eagerness, "I wish I could go to-morrow—to-day! Oh, that I could get some means o leaving!"

"Well, I will ask mamma, and she can write to a friend whose delight and vocation it is to get governesses and servants for her acquaintance—I will, indeed! In the mean time would it not be as well for you to go out and improve your health? Come, be reasonable, be good, Janet, and come out now."

"Very well, I suppose I must bear it," was the answer, and soon the two girls went out towards the beach. They took a seat, and Janet asked questions about any governesses Agnes had known or seen.

Before long Mr. Spencer saw them, and a few strides over the pebbles brought him to their rock. "Here, George, you are just in time to give advice. Do you know, among your

numerous acquaintance, any one needing a governess? Don't look surprised, but think; for our friend here is breaking her heart for the pleasure of teaching the alphabet to some dirty little spoilt urchins. Wouldn't it be fun to see Janet teaching and getting into a rage! Oh, I wouldn't be her pupils. Won't she box their ears!"

Janet laughed, but George looked grave and gave no answer at first. Then, after a few searching glances at Janet's flushed face, he said, "Find a situation?—I shall certainly send an anonymous letter warning any one against a young lady calling herself Janet Nairn!"

"And I," said Agnes, "will certify that she is quite incapable; but oh, horrors! there are the Nortons bowing! I must go and speak to them for five minutes, I will come back directly." Saying this she lightly tripped over the rough stones and met her friends, an elderly couple, who, even for the pleasure of shaking her by the hand, said they could hardly undertake to cross such a barrier.

"I hope—don't think me presuming—but I hope you have had no trouble, no fresh trouble, to induce you to entertain so horrible a notion?" said Mr. Spencer to Janet.

"Is it very horrible?" she asked. "Not worse than —than many other things," she added, with hesitation.

"I can fancy nothing more trying, more forlorn; I should be sorry to see any one I cared for in it. But it can't be. Other fate is in store for Miss Nairn."

"The fate of a miserable dependent, of being where I am not wanted." She turned her face away to hide a tear.

"I am a heedless rattling fellow, I believe," he said, while knocking off the limpets on the rock. "But I see more

than perhaps you give me credit for. I know some of your troubles."

"You are very kind, I know," said Janet.

"Don't say so; not in that way, at least; it sounds so formal and cold. It is a pleasure to me if I can in the remotest way give you pleasure. Don't you know it? I hope when my mother leaves this place, you will come and stay with her for a long visit. Agnes wishes it much, and—— It is abominable," he interrupted himself with sudden change of voice, "of those old ladies to try you so. I should have judged better of Mr. Russell than to allow it."

"Oh, don't talk so of him, pray. He has nothing to do with all that. Indeed, I didn't complain of any one. They have been very good and kind, but naturally I wish to be independent, and to work for myself."

"It would be a pleasure to—to many, to work for you. Please don't talk of it, or I don't know what I may say!" His voice was so low that she did not quite hear him, and now Agnes came back, crunching the gravel and stones, and laughing.

"Well, have you settled it? You look so grave, I do believe you have been quarrelling."

"Janet will stay with us when we leave this," he said.

Agnes smiled, amused at his calling her by her name, but he was not aware that he had done so.

"Well, Mr. Free-and-Easy, you *are* cool," she said. "Now do you pretend that you did not know that you called her Janet? Oh, Janet! this brother of mine is a regular spoilt man, and he thinks himself privileged to take any liberty and do any thing he likes."

"Nonsense, Aggy! But did I really, now?" and there

was a slight blush on his handsome face. "Well, to say the truth the name is often in my thoughts, and then I hear you call her so—in fact, I hope my fault is not unpardonable—is it?" he said, looking at Janet.

Her eyes drooped a little as she said "No."

"If I repeat the error, shall you be very angry? Janet is a pretty name, and comes naturally to my lips. May I?" he said, half in a playful and half in an earnest way.

Janet said, "Oh, of course you may do as you like. I don't care much about it, except from Edward Mitchell, and perhaps, one more, Mr. Lewis: I hate *them* to call me so."

"Well, I am proud that you grant me a privilege more than those gentlemen; thank you," he said, and Agnes and George both laughed. The tide was washing up very near their feet, and after watching Agnes coquette with the waves, and sending the big dog after a few stones and sticks, they turned towards the cliff-path.

Janet's spirits had risen again. She talked happily, and lost her grave looks, till on meeting Mr. Russell, as usual, he led Agnes a little way on and talked in a low voice to her.

"Those two have some plot, I suspect," said George, but Janet gave no answer; she had no more smiles, and hardly any words. She said she was tired, and she looked so.

George Spencer felt all the more attracted, however, as she drew back. He began to doubt if he was right in being so very sure of her good will towards him. Trifling changes, not to be described, had given him just a twinge of doubt. This was a novelty to him, and it only acted as a stimulus; but he tried to remember who there was, who was the most

likely to rival him. She had danced at the picnic with several gentlemen, but he could not fix on any one. But this and the idea of the governess kept her in his thoughts a great deal.

Mr. Russell seemed in unusually good spirits after his return from his walk. Perhaps every one understands that feeling of annoyance or joy at seeing others merry, when we not only do not know why they are so, but are very much the contrary ourselves.

Janet resented his gaiety as if he was unkind and unfeeling. She made short speeches and gave grave looks, till, vexed with herself and every one else, she said a cold "Good-night," and left them.

No sooner was she outside the door, than the remembrance of Jacob's last earnest and questioning look reproached her bitterly. Hasty and impetuous in all her ways, she made some excuse for returning; searched for a book, found it, and then seizing a moment when the sisters were engrossed with some subject of interest, she caught his hand with an impulsive gesture, and pressing it in an humble imploring manner, begged his pardon. He looked surprised, but said nothing then. Going out of the room with her, he laid his hand on her head in his own way and said, "What is it, Janet?"

"Nothing; only I have been so rude and cross. I know it—but indeed I'll try to be better. Only I am so miserable sometimes." Her voice was half choked in sobs.

"Miserable! I hoped you were so happy. I rejoiced for your sake in your new friends." He stopped and sighed. She struggled to get her hand free from his then, but he would retain it.

"Tell me, can I do anything for you? Can I help you? Always come to me, Janet. I am a stupid fellow, but God knows I desire your happiness."

"Nothing, nothing!" she exclaimed, in an agitated voice. "Only I am sorry for speaking so coldly and crossly just now. I did not mean it."

He looked earnestly at her for a moment, and then he stooped as if intending to kiss her forehead, but changed his mind suddenly. "Good-night; God bless thee, my child," he said, turning away. But Janet kissed his hand in her impetuous way, and then rushed into her room.

When there she fell on her knees, and gave way to a violent fit of crying. It was as if her heart was weeping itself out. She was quite exhausted when she heard a footstep, and had just time to rise before Betty came in. Her smiling smooth face was a contrast to the pale agitated countenance of the young girl.

She started a little, but with intuitive delicacy said nothing, only when Janet bathed her eyes, and rolled up her fallen hair, she produced from under her apron a large parcel. "Look here, Miss Janet. Master begs you'll be pleased to accept of this from him, and sure, miss, 'tis fit for yourself, and will show off, I'll war'n', at Miss Rose's party."

With infinite pride she undid and held up a very delicate and pretty blue and white silk, nicely and tastily made — a very different affair from anything Janet had hitherto worn.

"And here's gloves and they things! Now, miss, fit it on. And ain't it real grand, now?"

Janet looked, and touched, and smiled; but with the smile

came a shiver, which caused Betty to say she had a cold, and was not well.

"How did he get it? Of course it is your doing, Betty," she said, with flashing eyes.

"Well, I'll not deny but I hinted that you couldn't go to the party without a suitable dress; it wouldn't be for the credit of the family, you know. So he says, says he, 'Who can get it, Betty? Can you?' 'Good now, sir,' says I, 'I'm a poor hand for getting of dresses for ladies, but,' says I, 'couldn't you persuade that young lady to choose out one?' 'Oh,' says he, all delight, 'the very thing!' and so you see, miss, between 'em they've got this here; so if you had a seen un when the box comed—and her too—well, I declare, 'twas a pretty sight! Her smiles is as sweet as cowslips and as soft as butter, and he thanked her, and was as pleased as Punch; and I hope you'll be the same, Miss Janet, though you don't look well to-night, somehow. Come, let me unfasten your things. You've been reading agin, I'll war'n', and made your head ache!"

Janet looked no more towards the elegant silk as it lay on the chair. She was very white, and her lips quivered as if she was suppressing her feelings.

Betty talked on, dearly loving a "tell."

"O, Miss Janet, they say master's greatly taken with that pretty creature, bless her! Sure 'twould be a happy thing; for he's in his prime, and he has plenty to set up housekeeping with. The old name shouldn't die out—and there, missis would be pleased after a bit, I know; and wouldn't it be nice, miss?"

"O don't, Betty! I don't care. What is it to me? I

shall be far away, I hope. And you are the only one I shall mind leaving!"

She threw herself on the faithful woman's neck, and wept afresh.

Betty was sadly disappointed, but judging that it was all from over-fatigue, she got her into bed, and hung the dress carefully and with admiring eyes in the press, hoping Janet would be pleased to see it on the morrow.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE STRAWBERRY PARTY.

WHERE is the human being, male or female, midway in their teens, who has not a certain pleasure which nothing can altogether destroy, in seeing a becoming and pretty garment intended for self?

Janet had once said that every flower she received from the Russells had its thorn. And in this blue and white silk, pretty as it was, and acceptable too, if she must go to the party, Janet certainly must have found some drawback, judging by the contrary expressions which flitted over her face, as she surveyed it on the following morning very much at her leisure, having put open the door of the press and standing before it, whilst braiding her hair.

One might read a whole world of feelings excited by this present. There was expectation of pleasure, a certain self-confidence which a well-made, well-chosen dress imparts; and judging of the coming party by the last, smiles curled her lips at the thought. Then suddenly a shadow seemed to pass over her, and the lips were firmly set together, and the brow looked dark and clouded. Then her eyes dimmed as if tears were ready to start, and the lips quivered while she

turned away from the sight. Again a humble and grateful half-pleased expression came; and so it went on, till, when dressed, she remembered she ought to thank Mr. Russell graciously. How was this to be done? She would rather pack up the gown and send it away, than do it. Perhaps it would be easier to write; and, accordingly, sundry sheets of paper were defaced, and torn to scraps, till sounds without told her she must go to breakfast.

Besides, the dread of returning thanks there was the probable, or rather certain anger which would come, when "the ladies" knew of such a costly gift.

She instinctively raised her hands to her ears, as she imagined the torrent of deprecating reproach, and the surprise that Jacob should be so very foolish and wrong, which was sure to follow the discovery.

Janet determined to brave it, and thank him at once, but he was deep in a book, and hardly returned her "Good morning," though when she was seating herself at table he did make up for it by a smile and nod. It was impossible to say anything then.

There was much conversation during the meal, but at every pause Janet grew red and nervous.

Mr. Russell left the room before any one else rose from table, so she had no further opportunity till dinner-time. It rained all day, and they saw nothing of the Spencers, though a note from Agnes came, proposing that Janet should dine with them on the following day, and dress and go with her to the party.

Miss Russell consented, saying it would save Betty the trouble of walking to the Roses, and she could ill spare her; but Janet felt guilty at being so glad to accept the invitation,

and escape any withering looks of contempt which might be cast on her if she showed herself when dressed.

Mr. Russell did not return for dinner; she saw nothing of him till the evening, and by that time had worked herself into something like a fever of excitement and nervousness. It was getting dark, and Mr. Russell took his book to the window. Miss Russell seemed to be dozing in her chair; Anna was not in the room.

"Now or never," Janet thought, and creeping softly to his side, she put her trembling hand lightly on his arm, to draw his attention, and in the best voice she could command, which was a husky whisper, she said,

"Thank you. I have been wanting to thank you all day."

The hand was caught, and pressed tenderly to his side.

"The best thanks will be, the seeing you look nice and happy in it."

"Shall you see me?"

"Yes; I intend to go. Are you surprised?"

"I am glad."

Again she felt her hand pressed, though very gently, and she fancied she heard a half-suppressed sigh. The rain had ceased; and there was still the reflection of a red glow on the top of the cliffs, which was visible from the window.

"I hope it may be fine to-morrow, or half the fun will be spoilt; they say it is so pleasant to have the strawberries and cream under the trees."

He did not answer, and for some moments they stood in silence unnoticed, her hand still held against him. At last Miss Russell said,

"Jacob! Janet! where are you? Oh! there! What are

you looking at? Come away, Janet; what can you be about, standing in the dark there, idling? Come away."

"We were speculating on what that red light foretold for to-morrow, sister," said Jacob, once more pressing Janet's hand, as with startled haste she tried to withdraw it.

His voice had an odd sound—so odd that Janet wished there was light for her to see if the face agreed at all with it. But he left the room, and did not appear again till prayer time.

Janet had to listen to a lecture on behaving with propriety. She was told not to push herself so much into notice. It was not proper for ladies to be standing at a window looking at the moon with a gentleman.

"There was no moon," Janet could not help saying.

"Well, sun, then; sunset was nearly as bad! It was all her doing. Let Jacob alone, and no one could be steadier—he was even shy with ladies; but Miss Russell had had occasion to remark before that Janet was inclined to be forward. There was not a proper backwardness about her, such as in Miss Russell's time was considered proper for young girls. Certainly fashions were altered. Gentlewomen now-a-days forgot to be dignified, but were ready to shake hands with every gentleman. In her day it was thought an honour to touch a lady's hand at all! She assured her that, though men were silly enough to encourage such familiar ways, they did not approve of it; and least of all Mr. Russell. There was no one thing he spoke so severely about as forwardness of manner in young girls."

Janet's attention had wandered far away, while this advice was delivered in rather a sleepy, though severe tone. Anna's coming in from her infant-school, and inquiring for some

books she had left for Janet to cover, broke up the tête-à-tête, and recalled Janet to the actual present, from which she had in fancy been far away. In spite of the unpleasant day she had spent, there was a glow on her heart that night, and when she again took a peep at the silk, and even touched it, it was with pleasure and admiration.

Janet was very much relieved on the following morning, when she heard Mr. Russell, with a slight dash of dry fun, ask his sisters what dress they had provided for Janet.

"Dress! what sort of dress! What did he mean?"

"I mean something fit for this party."

"Oh, really, if she is to be buying expensive gowns she had better stay at home. It could not be afforded! She could wear the same dress that had served for the picnic, of course."

Anna said she would lend her some pink bows, which would do very well on her old white muslin; if it was too long for Janet it could be tucked up.

There was a little indignant look in Jacob's face as he answered very quietly,

"It is lucky some one had the kindness to think that something was needed. Janet, show my sisters what Miss Spencer has procured for you."

Janet obeyed, glad to have the truth thus brought out.

"And pray who paid for it?" exclaimed Miss Russell, settling her spectacles in very wrathful fashion. "I suppose you mean me to admire it? I do not; and I consider it utterly unbecoming to her station; besides, after our late losses——"

"Sister, no one will be the poorer for this expense, if that is really any satisfaction to you. I was only too glad and

thankful that some one had the thought to tell me it was needed."

He spoke firmly, and in a tone his sisters understood it was useless to oppose; so after Janet carried it away, they alluded no more to the silk. Only once or twice she heard it muttered that there must be "a stop put at once to such goings on."

It was a pleasant time, that dressing for the party. Agnes was full of joy and fun, and so eager to make Janet look nice.

When dressed she went into the drawing-room. Mr. Russell was there, and Mrs. Spencer. They both approved of the dress, and were talking how the secret was kept so well, when Agnes came tripping in with a wreath of flowers and some strings of pearls on her arm.

"Oh, mamma, and Mr. Russell too, don't you think she ought to have just a something in her hair?" and she held the flowers against Janet's head while she spoke.

Mr. Russell said he could fancy the pearls would look well, but did not like the flowers.

Janet wished to have nothing, but Agnes made her sit down, and laughing and making a joke about doing it in the drawing-room, she proceeded to twine the beads with the long, rich, silky coils which were wound round and round Janet's head.

It was a pretty sight, and Jacob, who had unconsciously an artist's eye for effects, stood wishing he could make a picture there and then.

Agnes, so sylph-like, in some transparent soft material, which floated like a cloud about her, silver stars showing here and there among her bright ringlets, so prettily eager in her work; while Janet's pure ivory complexion, set off by the

pale blue and shining white; her eyes on the ground, and hidden by the long curled eyelashes, but a smile breaking out, in spite of efforts to keep it in. The contrast between the two, and the setting off, in the rich furniture about the room, altogether formed a picture.

George Spencer came in during the performance, and Janet would have hastily risen, but Agnes held her, crying out, "Oh Janet, you nearly pulled all your hair down. Sit still! What is the harm of my putting in these pearls? Only your hair is so extraordinarily long; there is no end of it."

Mr. Spencer expressed his approval of his sister's handiwork, and looked his admiration of the "turn out" very plainly. He said there was only one thing wanting, and that he hoped Janet would allow him to supply. As he spoke, he unwrapped a beautiful bouquet.

"Ah!" said Agnes, clapping her hands, "that is famous! But I shall be jealous; have you none for me?"

"Oh, I leave others to give it to you."

"Have *you* none, Mr. Russell? Then I must wait till my constant friend comes to my aid. No doubt, Miss Nairn, I shall eclipse that paltry bunch of roses and myrtle. You will envy my geraniums!"

The carriage was soon announced, and they all got in but Mr. Russell who preferred walking.

After the first fire of disagreeable remarks from the Mitchells about her dress, Janet forgot all trouble, and threw herself with spirit into the gaiety before her. She was much sought for the dance, and thoroughly enjoyed it, but at last saying she was tired, she took a seat near Mrs. Spencer. Agnes was rallying and teasing Mr. Russell to dance, and she

told him he had no business there if he did nothing but stand out and make disagreeable remarks. He maintained that he had very good reasons for coming, to watch and take care of Janet, and that he liked seeing gay people. Supper was announced, and he turned as if about to offer his arm to Janet, but George Spencer hurried forward and claimed her, as having danced the last dance with him. Agnes was taken by some one else, and Janet looked back sorry, seeing that Mr. Russell sat on the sofa, instead of joining the throng to the supper-room. George's remarks, however, soon claimed all her attention. He was quite the life of that part of the table; attentive to every one, and keeping up a general flow of talk, which astonished Janet, particularly as he never forgot her, and found time to whisper several of those pleasant "nothings" in her ear, in that tone and manner which made her blush, while she avoided meeting his eye, though it gave her a flutter of pleasure.

They danced together again after supper. Janet expressed her surprise at Mr. Russell's liking to come,—it was so unusual for him to go to any party. George looked at her in a very meaning way, while he asked if there was not an attraction, and directed her attention to where Agnes was seated, Mr. Russell close behind her, and in earnest talk.

Janet's face was crimson in a moment.

"I like it very much; he is a good fellow," was George's next remark. "My consent is quite ready. Don't you agree with me in thinking it likely?"

"Perhaps—I don't know—yes," was her hesitating reply.

After a few moments' silence Janet began to talk about something else.

She was unusually animated and excited. George thought

her in wonderfully high spirits, and attributed it to the consciousness of having caused somewhat of a sensation; she could not remain blind to her powers of attraction. He watched the bright colour which was so delicately soft, he tried to catch her bright though rather restless eye, and thought he had never seen anything so lovely as the turn of her head and neck. He never paid her more decided attention than he did then, and she seemed to receive it in good part.

The young people settled to walk home. George gave his arm to Janet quite as a matter of course, and Mr. Russell followed with Agnes. They went round by the Spencers' house, and stood a little while to watch the moon rise on the sea.

"A few years hence I wonder how the remembrance of this evening will return to us four individuals?" remarked George, in a low voice to Janet. His unconscious sigh was echoed by her, but she made no other answer.

"It has been a delightful—a marked evening," he continued; "you have liked it, have you not? At least, I hope so. No, don't hurry on!" and he laid his hand on hers, which trembled a little on his arm, to prevent her from hurrying after the others, who had turned as if to go. "Don't go! it is so delicious here! Such a pure, fresh night! Don't you feel it so?" he added, with an evident anxiety in his manner to make her respond to his feelings. "I could stay another hour willingly. Look at that tremulous quiver on the sea. Do you know I don't generally care for moonlight. It is too cold—too pale. You think me a Goth;—didn't you say so? or what did you say?"

"I did not speak," she answered.

"But you like it, I know," he said, "and to-night—now —I feel its beauty. It is so soothing after the stir of a party. What is Aggy in such a hurry about? Must we go? There can be no fear of damp or cold. You don't feel chilly, do you? Let me wrap this closer round you," and he disengaged his arm, and carefully and lingeringly adjusted her cloak, in spite of her hurried protestations against being left behind, and her being at all cold.

He saw the signs of flurry in her face by the light which fell on them both. It pleased him. And the kerchief she had hastily tied under her chin by way of head-covering, gipsy fashion, was so becoming, he could not resist the temptation, and so affected awkwardness in fitting the buttons, as an excuse for yet lingering over the task. But she would not suffer it any longer, and hurried him on.

When they reached Rock House, Jacob took Janet, and they wished Mr. and Miss Spencer good night. But hardly had they gone three steps before George overtook them, having seen Agnes safe within doors, and he said he should accompany them if they would allow it, for he could not go in on such a night, and besides wanted to enjoy a cigar as he returned.

Mr. Russell made a feint of releasing Janet's arm, evidently expecting her to prefer taking Mr. Spencer's again. But she clung fast to him, and would not see George's offered arm. She was conscious of a close and kind pressure by way of answer to her mute appeal.

When at Queen's Terrace, George shook hands with her, and she hastily turned away from his look, which there was light enough for her to see.

"I shall call to-morrow and inquire after my partner," she heard, and also Jacob's hearty, "So do."

Betty's blinking sleepy eyes smiled her welcome, and on her master expressing a fear that she was very sleepy, she rubbed them, and tried to look as if it was the pleasantest thing in the world to watch the greater part of the night.

"The ladies had been asleep for hours," she said, as she proceeded to help Janet to disarray herself; first saying she looked "all well as ever did Cinderella with her fairy dress and glass slipper, and she knew who the young prince was as would come next day and fit the slipper on."

Long after Betty left, Janet looked at the moon, soon to be followed by the sun. But late as it was, she felt no inclination to sleep. Her mind seemed in confusion. There was a strength of bitterness—or was it jealousy?—which frightened her, roused by a few light words. Under its pressure she almost forgot what had impressed her at the time, and latterly had caused her even painful annoyance, namely, George Spencer's manner towards herself. But she was too excited then to feel clearly about anything; and as for sleep, it would not come. So a headache was the natural consequence for the next day.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DRIVING.

"Well, Janet," said Anna, two or three days after the party, speaking in her most sprightly way, and chucking her under the chin, "Well, Janet, I really do hope you will be careful of your manners. Why, we need not think of being a governess now! But let me caution you; you are apt to be ungracious. Mr. Lewis always notices this. You ought to be ready to go down on your knees to Mr. Spencer for admiring you so."

Janet drew back and drew up, and her look said plainly, "What do you mean?"

"It is really a most charming, delightful thing," continued Anna; "but there is sometimes a slip between cup and lip, you know. So be careful, be careful, I pray; for Mrs. Spencer may possibly object——"

"Indeed, very likely, I should think," said Miss Russell. "She will naturally look high for her son."

"And I am sure I don't wish to stand in her way! It is very hard——" Janet could say no more.

"Well, really there is nothing to cry about, Janet, but everything to be happy and grateful for; only, as I say, be careful to attract him by amiability, and don't frighten him

with black looks," said Anna, as she tripped away to finish spreading out her seaweed, humming a tune as she went.

Martha came in for orders from her mistress, and Janet was soon left alone.

Anna's speech made her very uncomfortable, though it only helped to confirm what she had often condemned as a fancy of her own. She desired to shun him and even his sister Agnes, and constantly contrived to avoid driving, saying she wanted more exercise and could walk. She had not been out at all for several days when one evening Agnes came to beg her to walk with her. Agnes was alone, so Janet agreed with some coaxing. They took their favourite turn on the cliff, but conversation flagged; Agnes seemed pre-occupied—half-restrained, and Janet was silent. They sat down on one of the wooden seats. In a few minutes Agnes sprang up, "Oh, there's Miss Mitchell and her brother. Janet, Janet! run! don't look behind; beside," added Agnes, laughing, "they'll be tired of waiting."

"Who?" asked Janet, following Agnes's light steps.

"Mamma, and George, and Mrs. Mitchell; they are to wait at the stile and take you home. *I* settled it, dear, because I thought you would be tired."

"Oh, Agnes, you should not do so! I do not like driving. I don't like others settling for me. Besides, how are you going home?"

"Oh, I shall not mind walking alone; but there will be no occasion; for look, Janet, there's my friend Mr. Russell. That will be nice!"

"Let us all go home together; I cannot drive," said Janet.

"I dare say! and I wonder what mamma will say, and

George. He has set his heart on your coming. I know he is all impatience."

"I wish you would not make engagements for me, Agnes ; you don't know how it annoys me," said Janet, blushing, and with the full recollection of Anna's speech.

Jacob now came up and shook Agnes's hand heartily. She playfully asked him to escort her home, as Janet was to be taken up in the carriage. He did not answer directly. He looked at Janet, then said, "You are very good, I am sure; she is tired, I dare say—it is very thoughtful of you."

He turned and went with them to the lane. They had scarcely cleared the stile when George Spencer's voice was heard.

"Very punctual, young ladies, I must say. Ah! Mr. Russell, it is your fault, I see. Twenty minutes past time, Agnes ; my mother is nearly in a nervous fever."

"Don't flurry them—don't be uncomfortable, my dears," said Mrs. Spencer. "We can't have been so long as that, and I am sure it has been very shady and pleasant ; it was only George who grew impatient. Even the horses stood quite still. How are you, my dear Miss Nairn?" and she put out her hand and drew back her veil. "Ah, Mr. Russell, are you going to take care of Aggy? Very good of you, I am sure."

"I daresay you'll meet my girls ; they are gone out this evening," called out Mrs. Mitchell, as they drove off.

"It is early yet ; you don't want to go home, do you, mother?" said George.

"Not at all, my dear, if you wish to go further, and if Mrs. Mitchell and Miss Nairn like it."

Mrs. Mitchell nodded, and said she had nothing particular to do; she was ready to go on.

"Which way shall it be then?" said George to Janet.

"Don't ask me—ask Mrs. Spencer."

"She doesn't care; she is sure to be pleased if I am, and I should like to please you; you know I am always amiable." As Janet did not answer, he added, "Well, we will take this turn by way of variety. There is a capital old tumble-down cottage here which would make a good sketch for Aggy."

Janet turned round and asked Mrs. Spencer about the stitch of a certain toilette-cover she was knitting. Janet talked faster than usual, and seemed much interested in all the particulars—the kind of cotton, the size of the needles, and the fringe edge.

"But, my dear, don't turn round so, you will get a stiff neck. You shall see it; come some evening and see it; don't, pray don't turn so now," and Mrs. Spencer leant back in the hood and put her hand on her mouth by way of enforcing silence.

Janet watched the wheels and the ruts now.

"I didn't know you were so great a knitter," George remarked.

"I am not a knitter at all."

"Well, so I thought. I fancied I had heard you say you did not like it."

"I don't recollect what I said about it, but it is true," said Janet, still looking at the wheels.

"Was it out of pure kindness to my mother, then, that you were so eager and animated about the work, or was it——"

"Really, I don't know," and Janet moved her hand

impatiently, as it rested on the side of the seat. "I often say things without thought and out of absence. Besides," added she, recovering her usual tone a little, "besides, I suppose I may be interested in other people's occupations, even if they are not quite to my taste."

"Certainly." George stooped forward to disentangle the whip, and in so doing caught a glance of Janet's face, which made him suddenly change the subject. He pointed out the effect of the light as it fell across the heath. He spoke of the purple heather, of the pleasure he felt in moorland scenery. Janet's stiffness of manner wore off. Mrs. Spencer and Mrs. Mitchell were talking, and not watching and listening; she felt rather ashamed at her own temper, and made up for it by listening and talking her best for the rest of the way.

As they drew near Wareham, Mrs. Spencer leant forward and begged Janet to return with them to spend the evening, when she should see the toilette-cover. Janet smiled, and blushed slightly, for George was looking at her; but she said she could not come, for she was wanted at home that evening. Some other time she should be happy. Mrs. Spencer was very sorry, but then begged George to drive them by Queen's Terrace, and put Miss Nairn down at her own door. George objected, and said the turning was so awkward, he knew very well his mother would be frightened to death.

"Oh, pray don't," said Janet, "I can walk quite well."

"Then, George, you must walk home with Miss Nairn, my dear."

"No; pray don't," again said Janet; "don't give yourself so much trouble; I can go alone, it is but a few steps."

"Trouble!" said George, bending towards her; "trouble!" then with a sudden change of voice, he added "Ma'am, the trouble is a pleasure, I assure you," bowing low as he spoke.

Janet laughed, but secretly hoped that Mr. Russell and Agnes might be returned, and that they might meet, which would save the tête-à-tête walk.

No such good fortune awaited her, however. George had it all his own way.

He offered his arm to her, and they set off together. Very little was said, and when they reached the door she wished him "Good evening."

"Don't send me off," said he, laughing, and shaking her hand in a way which made her blush; "I mean to ask after Miss Russell's eyes."

Jacob and Agnes were there, and Eleanor and Anna were busy over some feather-screens—a new kind, which Eleanor was teaching her friend how to make. Their bonnets were off, and they were evidently there for the evening. George was pressed to stay, and he said he should like nothing better, turning round to look at Janet as he spoke. But as he took a step towards her, Janet moved, and went into her room to take off her things. The merry voices reached her ear so plainly that she could distinguish Jacob's from its deepness. They were all cheerful and pleased but herself, and she was unhappy. She looked at her cotton dress. She did for one moment contrast it with all the others. But it was not this that made her heart ache! She took herself to task for being unreasonable, discontented, and thought her step-mother must have been right in pronouncing her a bad-tempered girl. Betty heard the voices too, as she worked in the kitchen, and she could not resist taking a peep at the

company, so she helped Martha to carry up the tea. Her first look almost made her smile before them all. It was at seeing "Master" laughing and talking to that sweet pretty creature, Miss Agnes Spencer. Somehow or other Agnes always did draw out Jacob, and to-night he was not like himself—so bright and so pleasantly talkative—so eager about the music! Betty's next trip to the parlour with the cake and toast made her a little grave. She did not fail to remark the difference in Janet's dress from that of the rest of the party. "Ah!" thought she, "if I had but the fingering of a few pounds, my dear, you should have a better dress than that! But, howsoever, she has the beauty which beats them all. Aye, even that laughing young lady isn't like her; and I see some folks think as I do, too!"

But Janet looked grave and unhappy, and Betty sighed at it, and wondered why it was; till Martha relieved her by saying, when she brought down the tea-things, that Miss Janet was at the piano, and all of 'em crowding round her, and she looking so pleased, and master singing uncommon fine! Then Betty was happy again.

George Spencer had seated himself by Janet at tea, but he did not address himself to her in conversation. Once he bent his head and said something—merely a common remark—but Janet happened to catch Anna's eye. Anna gave her a nod of encouragement. The cold look was returning, but just then Janet looked at Agnes, and she was smiling archly. Who could resist that smile? Not Janet; she smiled too; but it was a shaded smile. George turned and talked to Miss Russell till tea was over. Then he asked for some music; but Janet was unwilling, and excused herself in so spiritless a way that George, being really good-natured, forbore to press

her, and begged his sister Agnes to sing instead. When the song was over, Mr. Russell was coaxed by Agnes and George into giving them some old airs, which he played in a way seldom heard.

"What is the name of that last thing?" inquired George.

"Really I don't know—in fact—" and Mr. Russell spoke with slight embarrassment—"in fact—the tune—it is just something of my own."

"You are a composer as well as a performer, then?" exclaimed both Agnes and George.

"In a small way," was the answer, quietly laying aside his violin.

"Bless me, yes!" said Miss Russell; "Jacob has invented many tunes, or composed as you call it. Some people have sense of an uncommon and useless kind, I believe, and sometimes they chance to hit on a useful discovery or invention, and turn it to profit. But, would you credit it? Jacob is so entirely from head to foot unpractical, that once, when he was offered a good round sum for just a few twiddle-dee-dees he scraped on his fiddle—out of his head, you know—he actually refused—yes, refused—to sell it, though he was bred a trader as his father was before him, and one would have thought knew the justice of selling anything of his own. You can't deny it, can you, Jacob?"

"No, it is true. But I did not need the money, and, to say truth, I was afraid——"

"Of what? Of growing fond of money? I don't think there was much risk of that," said his sister in a sarcastic tone.

"No, afraid of being led to devote more time and attention to music. It was a great temptation then—very great; and

this man's offer and proposals were not easy to forget, I assure you. What with my fiddle and pen, you know, sister, I wasted some precious hours as it is."

"That you did, Jacob! But would anyone believe," turning to the others, "that he had a grain of common sense; for just when he might have turned his fiddling to account, and made up in a way for lost time, he would not. It beats all; and let me live a century, I never can and never shall fathom the ins and outs of Jacob's fantastical mind."

* * * * * *

"Miss Janet," said Betty that night, "it's going on nicely, ain't it, miss?"

"What is?"

"Well, the courting. Anyone can see it with half an eye. Bless me! it makes me all so glad—for all the world as if it was just my own flesh and blood."

"I don't know what you mean," returned Janet, coldly. "At least," she added, half ashamed at the want of truth in her words, "I suppose I do know, but it is all nonsense. What makes you think so?"

"La! miss, why everybody thinks it! Anybody can't help thinking, when 'tis so plain afore one's very eyes. Ain't the master, bless 'un! changed like? Not so reg'lar and composed like in his ways; but up one minute and down another. Aye, aye, when he's alone, and don't think anybody sees 'un, he looks so thinking and considering—quite grave, and sighs! Sure he do sigh enough to make my heart ache, Miss Janet; for he don't take no notice of me, you see, when I'm about my work, and 'tis all the same as if I wasn't there; and I hear the sighs very plain, and know

by the face of 'un he is down in his mind, and doubting, you see. Then, by-and-by, when you all come past the windows, and I see master aside of her, why, his face is quite different; and she's got the way of bringing more words from him in a moment than others can get in a year; and he looks so happy and pleased—though, for all that, any one knowing him so well as I do can see there's a sigh very close behind they smiles;—but that's all according, you see, miss—when folks are a courting that's mostly the feeling, I believe."

"You seem to know a great deal about it, Betty. Pray have you had any experience?"

"La, bless you! I've not lived all these years and not gained no knowledge, miss; and I won't say but I've had my followers, too: but I don't give in to marriage—I'm best as I am."

"And I wish you would let others be so too," Janet said sharply. "A man can't speak nor smile, it seems, without its being put down to—to—love! I don't see what the master wants; and, moreover, I don't believe he means to be married, that's more, Betty."

"And why not, Miss Janet?"

"A hundred reasons! For one, what would Miss Russell say? And then—he is not so very young, now——"

"For that he ain't so very old, neither, as folks make out," Betty rejoined, almost angrily. "'Tis on account of his quiet, still ways, I reckon, and having sisters older than hisself. But the ladies is much older than master is, Miss Janet. Bless you, why he is in the prime of life. Why, he hasn't got not a grey hair! and as to the hairs being rather scant, I've heard them that thinks that a great set off to a man. 'Tisn't young lads mostly, who thinks of settling and getting a

family—though, of course," she added, correcting herself, as a sudden thought crossed her; "there's some here and there, maybe, with fortin' enough, who can marry when they're not much more than lads, and, of course, there's nothing to say agin it; quite the contrary, Miss Janet; and young sweethearts be very pleasant, no doubt, partic'larly if they be handsome and genteel. Yet, for all that I say, master's as good a right to think of getting a wife as e'er another gentleman, be he who he may, in all England! And there's some, though you mayn't think it, miss, as prefers one of his standing. La! I zim he has a rare and pleasant way, too, and when the light shines in his eyes, and he speaks earnest like, it seems to go right to anybody's heart; and as for fun, the master can joke with anybody, when he has a mind to! Many's the time I've thought about seeing him with his own children about his knees, all the same as if 'twas a picture. La! I can figure to myself just how he would look and speak. There would not be a better nor kinder father in all the world than master. He's just cut to the pattern, as you may say. And as to his wife, whoever it be, she will be a blessed woman and a happy lady, if ever man can make a woman so!"

"Oh, Betty! how you do run on!" Janet exclaimed, impatiently, and turning a flushed and, as Betty thought, a vexed face upon her.

"Well, I be an old chatterbox, and that's truth; and no wonder if you be a-weary of it. And you're tired, I'm thinking—so much company, and then the music do tire, I don't doubt; though 'tis nice and pleasant, and I'm sure no one can't say but what it does the master good. Ain't it just wonderful, miss, how he plays such beautiful tunes! 'Taint

like the same thing as Job Ball's fiddle, which I can't a-bear; and yet, to look at outside 'tis all the same as master's.

"Well, Miss Janet," Betty said, having no further excuse to linger, yet not able to restrain a few more parting words, "I said to Martha yesterday, when she comed tumbling up-stairs, and then catched her foot again directly after, says I, that's two weddings, Martha. 'Two?' says she; 'and who's the second then? Has our Miss Janet got that sweet pretty young gentleman for her beau in good earnest?' But I only smiled to myself, my dear Miss Janet; I didn't let out nothing to Martha. Only, you see, it will be two, I hope, and all in one day, too. And a fine rejoicing there'll be in Wareham, I know, for if ever anybody was just loved 'tis the master, 'mong the poor folks, and missis herself will rejoice after the first. For 'tis hard, you see, to part company with anything has been your very own like for so many years. And for a surety, master won't bring his bride to this house."

Janet had only a silent good-night for Betty for once—and was glad when the good soul stopped her kindly chatter and left her. "Everybody saw it and said so." So it must be true! And why not? What was it to her? Why did the very notion cause such sharp pain, such wretched, miserable feelings? Well, there was the old plan of being a governess before her. New scenes, new faces, and something she must do; and in time, perhaps, her father might come back. She had heard that it sometimes happened. When once with him she shouldn't care for anything—if all the world was married. Yet, as the thought flitted by, she felt it was not true, and a burning colour rose to her face, alone as she was,

as she felt that wherever she was, whatever happened, she should never, never like to think about *that;* that she must, in fact, learn to forget both of them. Then returned the echo of a voice wishful and earnest to please, anxious to win from her a smile or kind word,—a handsome face, a light, buoyant, youthful figure, considered worth much courting by all the people in Wareham, but who turned away from all to seek herself! Yes, she knew, could not but know and feel, that she was sought by George Spencer. Was he in earnest —did he love her? Or was it mere gallantry, what meant in society nothing—a little harmless flirtation? And how ought she to behave? How did she behave? Very wretchedly, she was afraid. So uncertain; now gracious, now cold. Would that she were far away; and yet, would she, if she had the opportunity, willingly go now? Miserable as it was, did she not wish to remain and see all? Waiting, waiting all day for a kind look or touch, perhaps, and when it came, upsetting all her previous resolutions, even changing her opinion. But this state of excitement and suspense was very trying.

From this time there was, indeed, little room for doubt as to George Spencer's attentions. Every day they met, and he was often at No. 1. Sometimes, when Janet felt angry, and thought he was only amusing himself, and could not be in earnest, she tried to be on her guard,—polite, but not encouraging; but more often she was cold and indifferent, or even haughty. George now made no secret of his wishes to Anna, and he had succeeded in gaining a warm ally in her; he had carte blanche to come to the house whenever he liked, and the seaweed and conchology afforded a convenient excuse. Mrs. Mitchell laughingly alluded to the subject when with

Mrs. Spencer, and added, "Young men are not often prudent. People talk, but then I say, Oh, it is only a passing flirtation; of course Mr. Spencer is not really going to marry her?" Mrs. Spencer sighed, and looked uneasy, and said she had heard from Miss Anna Russell that Janet's father had been of a good family, though now he was in misfortune. Of course she should have wished George to marry well, but after all she was a sweet girl, very beautiful too, and George had met with one or two disappointments in that way. She would not on any account wish to throw difficulties in the way, poor fellow. If she could only see him happily settled before she died, she should be very thankful. She did not care for money; she was always called romantic, and perhaps she was so. She owned she wished her children to marry young and for love; she had done so herself." Whenever the subject was thus brought before her, Mrs. Spencer sighed; but when she saw George looking well and pleased, and so contented to remain with her at Wareham instead of travelling, and Agnes, too, so happy, then Mrs. Spencer smiled, and felt that it was all right.

Once she alluded to the subject to her son, and asked if he was fully aware of the circumstances, of her poverty and dependence and connexions: but he said that only made him more determined to raise her to the position in which she ought and deserved to be. He confessed to his mother that there was a charm in the very novelty of the whole thing; she was so different from the race of well-dressed young ladies he had been in the habit of waltzing with and admiring. He had laughed at Agnes for being romantic, but he had been caught himself. He had always declared he would not marry for money. Then Mrs. Spencer warned

him not to be in too great haste, but take it quietly, and not commit himself. But he indignantly scorned such policy. He should try every means to win her, which he confessed he was not at all sure of doing; she was not a common kind of character by any means, but this only added a spur to his desire to please her.

END OF VOL. I.

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